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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 352. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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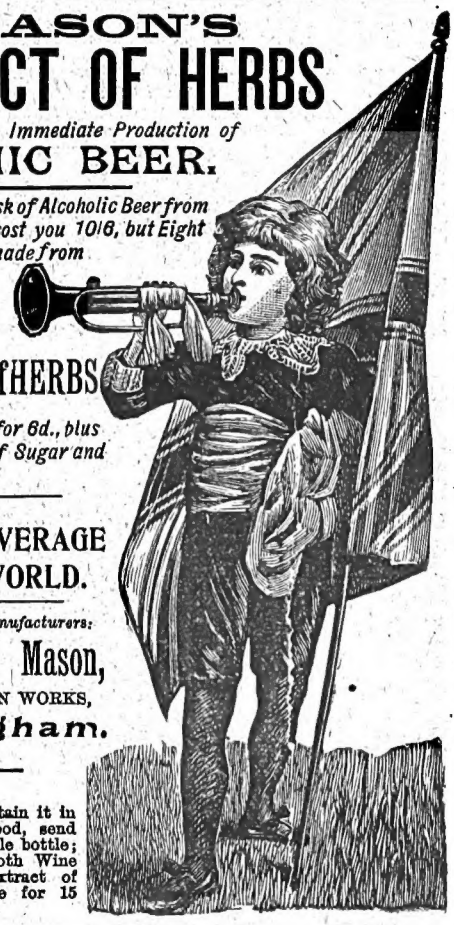

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED by C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 352.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending September 28th, 1895.

ACCIDENT OR DESIGN?

TWICE a year I visit France as buyer for a large importing house in London. In Marseilles I stop at a rather unpretentious hotel off La Cannebière. Jacques, the head waiter, when he was a *garçon* in a Paris café, once helped me out of a scrape; but that is not what I want to narrate now.

Early one evening, a soft twilight following a day of rain and clouds, I seated myself in a quiet corner of the upper balcony. I had had a busy, tiresome day, and was glad to be alone. My business at Marseilles was completed, and it was a relief to be free from the Oriental merchants with their oppressive salaams and calm mendacity. Thank Heaven, to-morrow I could set my face towards the land where human nature even was not inlaid and carved and veneered out of all semblance to itself.

I was gazing at the cosmopolitan, picturesquely dressed people coming into our quiet little street from the gay Cannebière. One by one the lights began to twinkle, and the moon rose with its face so solemnly white and expressive of eternal silence framed in the mystery of space, yet breaking into soft smiles and dimples as it glanced into the rippling waters of the old harbour beyond.

Suddenly the gas was lighted in a room behind me. A party of three entered, and seated themselves round the table. There were two men, both fine-looking fellows, and a pretty woman. In the careless glance of an indifferent stranger I saw this, and looked away while they studied the *menu* or chatted.

But my attention was again called to the room, when the slight dark man of the party rose and threw up the window a few inches. The other took advantage of his companion's absence, it would seem, to throw a glance full of love at his pretty *vis-à-vis*.

The dark man turned with a nervous rapidity to the table, and must have seen the look that still burnt in the blue eyes of the big blonde fellow. But, though he glanced carelessly at the two faces before him, his expression did not change. The pretty woman, I fancied, turned pale and trembled a little.

Somehow I was fascinated by this group, and my whole nervous system being relaxed after the strain of the past few days, I fell into an imaginative mood unusual to me. "Here is love," thought I, "trying to draw this fine handsome fellow and this pretty little woman together, while this dark Mephistopheles sneers at their love or jealousy stalks a tragedy to their happiness."

But these people looked very matter-of-fact, in spite of my imaginings, as they ate the supper before them. They chatted quietly, eating and sipping their wine with leisurely comfort. The dark man finished first, and pushed his chair back from the table.

"*Parbleu!* Mignonne, I think it would be well for me to get shaved before we go to the play. I have had

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no time to think of it, even to-day. What sayest thou?" and he playfully seized her hand and drew it over his cheek.

"It is not very rough; it looks very well," answered the little woman.

"Ah, but it will be rough and unpleasant by to-morrow, and then I shall have no time. It is strange," said he, turning to the other man with a peculiar glitter in his eyes, "that of late I cannot handle a razor myself without wishing to cut my throat, or someone else's," and he laughed maliciously, as his companions, especially the little woman, looked uncomfortable.

"I shall return by the time you and madame have finished supper. I beg that you will not hurry," he continued, with what seemed to me mocking politeness.

"You will not mind waiting here with Monsieur Steinert, Mignonne?" he asked, turning to the little woman with that same mocking tone. "Perhaps you would like to sit outside on the *galérie*; but no, the wind blows damp from the sea there. Dost feel it, Mignonne? Ah, thou art in a draught, my little one." And though the pretty woman protested, in a rather subdued way, I thought, that she was very comfortable, he rose, and, with a strange smile on his face, closed the thick wooden shutters with a bang.

This brought me to my senses. I realised that I had been unconsciously playing the part of an eavesdropper. I took my chair, and, going round the corner of the house, seated myself on the other side.

In a few moments I became aware of stealthy footsteps stealing along the silent piazza. A chill crept through my blood, and with it a horrible suspicion. Only a few days before a stranger had been murdered by a mysterious assassin who stole on his victims in the dark. An Englishman and a German had so far been the choice of this silent murderer.

Scarcely daring to breath, I peered round the corner. I saw a man now, motionless before the closed shutters of the room. The moon was scurrying along behind a pile of black clouds. It was quite dark, and at first I could barely see his figure. But in another instant a small ray of light fell across his face. I know not whether the expression it revealed was real or the grotesque painting of light and shade, but I saw what seemed like the grinning features of an enraged demon. Only for a moment he stood there; and then, with muttered words, he replaced something in the blind and stole softly away.

As he passed through the door at the far end of the piazza it shut with a loud bang. Something fell with a gentle noise to the piazza, and rolled near my corner. The moon passed out from its grim curtain, and I could just see the small something; I picked it up. By the light of a match I saw that it was a knot of wood, painted green on both ends. I rose, and, walking to the shutters of the little supper-room in which I had been so interested, I saw a small hole in the upper part of one of them. The knot just fitted it. As I was about to replace it I saw into the room. The fair man was holding the woman's hand; as he relinquished it he kissed it passionately. They both looked very sad.

I turned away from the window, filled with a strange sympathy for this pair. I did not care to sit longer on the piazza. I felt oppressed and chilled. As I stepped into the hall I met the trio of my thoughts. They were going out—to the theatre, I suppose—and the dark man seemed the easiest and was assuredly the most talkative of the three.

"Ah, Jacques," said I, as I encountered the head waiter at the door of the café, "who are those three people passing into the street from the private entrance?"

Jacques glanced into the hall as the three passed out.

"That is Monsieur Malhomme and his wife. Do you not know them? They are *pensionnaires* here. But you are here so little, monsieur, that I suppose you have not seen them. Besides, they do not eat in the café; they have one of the little rooms above. It is more private for madame, who does not like to be stared at so much—so monsieur her husband says to me."

"And the fair gentleman—who is he?" I asked again, with persistent curiosity.

"Oh, that is Monsieur Steinert, a German scientist—an inventor. Monsieur Malhomme is the greatest aeronaut of the day, and madame the most daring parachute jumper of the whole world," said Jacques magnificently, glancing round the tiny room and sweeping his hand in a graceful curve.

I knew Jacques well, and saw that this was an interesting subject. Questions were superfluous, for Jacques could not now be stopped from telling all he knew. He would tell no more—Jacques was that rare being of a higher life, a conscientious gossip.

"Yes," he continued, "Monsieur Malhomme is the greatest of aeronauts, and madame is incomprehensible, superb; her courage is of the most marvellous. Monsieur Steinert has made some improvement on the parachute, that makes it *absolument parfaite*," said the magnificent Jacques, with another of his sweeping gestures. "It is safe—there is no danger with this parachute. It cannot fail to open and bring madame safely to the ground."

I was now eating my horse-steak—or whatever it might be—but which Jacques politely called "*bif stec*," and listened comfortably to my talkative Gaul.

"Madame gives another exhibition with this parachute the most perfect, to-morrow. It will be the last in France. Monsieur must go and see it. It would not do to miss a sight so wonderful. All Marseilles will go."

Jacques now masked his smiles in a Jovian frown, as he strode with measured steps and imposing grandeur towards another guest seeking a seat in the well-filled café.

"Does not monsieur think madame very beautiful?" he inquired, returning to my table, where he could keep his eye turned in all directions. "She has all her life been an acrobat, but she is very modest and very good."

Jacques sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "Monsieur is jealous, they say; but it is not madame's fault if she is pretty, and Monsieur Steinert makes eyes at her—as I have myself seen." He looked mysterious. "I see many things, monsieur; but I am a philosopher, and take no notice of these little affairs, except to sympathise always with the heart." Here Jacques had to leave me again, and for once I was spared the polite but rather elaborate description of his philosophy.

The next day rose like a flushed nymph out of a bath of dew. It was delightfully sunny and warm, with a fresh exhilarating air. I drew a long breath as I stepped briskly along La Cannebière. I was following the crowd, and that meant all Marseilles. Its rather motley population was bent on seeing the balloon-ascent and the parachute-jumper.

The trains were crowded; and I felt as joyous and ready to run as a lot of wild youths who had been confined in the close apartment with me, when we alighted

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at St. Louis. This was the suburb of Marseilles where the ascent was to take place.

We were too early; and, as I had never visited St. Louis before, I spent the time in walking about its busy streets. I had not gone very far before I encountered Jacques; I was glad, as the most lonely place in the world to me is in the midst of thousands of my own kind, if I am a stranger and friendless.

Jacques was always more talkative than a barber, and more lissome than a contortionist, and to-day he was—Jacques. His eyebrows talked, his nostrils talked, and the tips of his ears talked; his legs, feet, arms, hands talked. I enjoyed my cigar all the more from the fact that I was not obliged to listen attentively to Jacques' monologue. He enjoyed his little speeches, and fancied himself, I often thought, declaiming to a large audience instead of one quiet middle-aged individual.

"Ah!" cried Jacques, drawing a long breath, "there is madame!" and he pointed to a lady seated in a carriage before a small house. It was the parachute jumper. She looked bright and flushed, and eagerly kissed an old man who came forth to greet her.

"It is her father," said Jacques. "She lived here once. See the old father, how proud! He, too, was an acrobat."

The old man entered the carriage. As he opened the door we passed before it and saw that, besides madame, there was another occupant. It was the German scientist—Monsieur Steinert. Jacques shook his head as the carriage drove off.

"That is very indiscreet," he said.

We followed the miserable shambling horse attached to the carriage, as it meandered down a widened road. We soon found ourselves in a wide open field among thousands of curiosity-feeders like ourselves.

The great balloon was inflated, and tugging at its moorings as though the breath within animated it with a savage restlessness.

The scene which followed was characteristically French. The aeronaut made a little speech. He described the parachute and the improvements invented by Monsieur Steinert, who thereupon had to make his bow and was duly applauded. Then madame was presented, and they cheered till the crowd of yelling Frenchmen looked like a Paris mob of mad communists. Even her aged father had to be brought forward, and he bowed his old stage bows proudly, as he held his daughter's hand.

"How can he smile?" I said to Jacques, "when his daughter is about to risk meeting a horrible death?"

My philosopher shrugged his shoulders, turned his elbows inward and the upturned palms of his hands outward, arched his eyebrows into inverted V's, and said: "But she is brave and beautiful; he is proud—her father. But oh! see! there she goes, *la brave madame!*" And Jacques nearly dislocated every joint in his body as he threw kisses at the parachute jumper fast rising into the clouds.

The balloon ascended very rapidly, and, it seemed to me, in almost a straight line. Even after it had reached a great height, it scarcely appeared to drift at all.

We watched it with that keen relish which always makes a real danger horribly delightful when our own gods are not threatened. Gradually the waving handkerchiefs of the balloonists became mere specks, then passed out of our vision.

I don't know whether the feeling of solemnity which stole over me oppressed any other breast with its uncanny weight; possibly it did, for the wild cheering ceased, and a strange stillness eloquent of expectation followed. With a unity of sentiments that was like the stringing of several notes into a sympathetic chord, we watched for the event of the day. At last it occurred.

A long-drawn intense "Ah!" announced that madame had jumped from the balloon.

Like a bit of vivid scarlet in the clear sunshine, she sped towards us with indescribable rapidity. The parachute had not yet opened.

Our nerves were strained to a dry fierce tension as we watched the shooting figure dart downward. Would the parachute never open?

My heart thumped as madly with excitement as must that in the bosom of the woman flashing like a meteorite through the air.

"But," I inwardly panted, "the parachute will soon open and relieve the horrible feeling of being hurled through space at that tremendous rate! She will soon steady into a comparatively floating motion—a gradual descent!"

But alas! seconds shot by, and the parachute was still closed.

Great Heavens! would it never open? A chill of horror swept over us; we craned our necks, we held our breaths, our pulses throbbed, our hearts knocked loudly, our lips grew dry, and yet the parachute had not opened! Was it hours, minutes, or seconds that we watched? The clock could not measure the time; only the mental dial which writes his hours in furrows and grey hairs marked it on our souls.

A deep groan distracted us for an instant. It came from Monsieur Steinert, who, with pallid face and wildly staring eyes, was gazing fixedly at the figure above us.

Ah, madame's old father! I had forgotten him till I saw him fall on his knees, his blue and trembling lips moving in prayer. His tear-dimmed eyes gazed terror-stricken upwards—only a little way now, only a little way, and yet the parachute had not opened.

With a savage bound, the German inventor sprang past me towards the spot where she must——

But I turned away, cold in my blood, faint and dizzy.

Then a cry of horror rose from the crowd now surging towards——! but I could not look, and staggered rather than walked to the station.

As a frightful shriek rent my ears, I looked backwards and saw the maddened German dash himself forward on something scarlet that was stretched on the ground, while the old father, dazed and half paralysed, still knelt and mumbled his prayers. Then the crowd closed round that bit of scarlet raiment, and I saw no more.

Had the aeronaut—my dark Mephistopheles of the night before—tampered with the parachute? Had he taken this means to revenge himself on his wife and her lover? Who can tell? I never could, though my suspicions do not sleep.

THERÈSE M. RANDALL.

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. . A ROMANCE . .

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

The prologue tells of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, in the Sanctuary of the Sun in Cuzco, on the eve of the Spanish invasion and the fall of the Inca empire. It has been prophesied that when the sceptre of the Incas shall be grasped by the hand of one who has been dead, and is alive again, the ancient glories of their empire shall be restored. Golden Star, one of the sacred Virgins of the Sun, kneels at the foot of the alter and offers herself as the bride of him who will fulfil the prophecy. Vilcaroya swears for love of her to dare the ordeal. On the night of their bridal they are carried away to their secret resting-place, and at the same time immense treasures are taken out of Cuzco, and hidden against the time of their awakening. Professor Martin Lamson brings back to England an unique mummy which he has found in a walled-in cave in a remote valley among the Cordilleras of the Peruvian Andes. A friend of his, Dr. Laurens Djama, a very clever physiologist, is present while he is unpacking it. He shows it to be entirely different from all other specimens of Inca embalming, and expresses the conviction that it might be possible to restore it to animation. The Professor consents to the experiment being made, and the mummy is removed to Djama's laboratory. In a week he sends for him and shows him his mummy alive and sleeping quietly in bed. The Professor is so overcome by the sight that he falls fainting by the bedside. After his recovery they watch by turns till the Inca wakes. The Professor learns that he is the Vilcaroya of the legend. He asks for Golden Star, and they have to tell him that she has been dead for over three hundred years. He promises them that if they will restore her, too, to life he will give them treasures such as they have never dreamed of. He rapidly regains health and strength, and learns the marvels of the new world in which he has awakened, chiefly under the guidance of Ruth, the Doctor's sister, and six months later all preparations have been made, and the party, including Ruth, embark for Peru.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN HARTNESS.

THE voyage from Southampton to Colon in the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's Ship *Orinoco* was a revelation of never-ceasing marvels to the ever-wondering eyes of Vilcaroya. The illimitable expanses of sky and ocean that opened out when the land had faded from sight, the ever-changing face of the sea, the ever-present miracle of the great ship ploughing its way with invisible and resistless force through the parting waves that swirled along her sides hour after hour and day and night without rest or pause, all these and a hundred other details which his ever-observant eyes discovered were to him a series of miracles wrought by some new power that had come into the world since his eyes had closed upon it.

The green, English-looking shores and slopes of Barbadoes, the rock-bound coast and forest-clad mountains of Hayti, and the verdant hills and valleys of Jamaica were all so many wonderlands to him, yet so strong was the habit of self-control which he had by this time acquired, that none of the fellow-passengers whom he met daily and hourly on the quarter-deck and in the saloon could have guessed, however remotely, at the fearful secret hidden behind the impassive mask of his comely, high-bred features, or ever felt the slightest suspicion that a re-incarnate ghost from the grave was so unobtrusively living their easy, idle, steamboat life with them.

So Colon was reached and the Isthmus was crossed. While they were going over in the train the Professor pointed out the wilderness of ruin that lay on both sides of the land, and told him briefly the history and inception and failure of the great canal scheme. Vilcaroya was silent for a few moments, then he looked up and said in a low tone:

"I will give you the gold to finish it with, if you like, when you have given Golden Star back to me."

It was the first time he had alluded to his hidden treasures since the Professor had asked him about them some five months before. Djama, who was sitting by, heard what he said. He looked at the Professor with raised eyebrows, and murmured:

The Professor pointed out the wilderness of ruin.

"That would be a great deal of gold even for you to give. Don't you think so, Lamson?"

"However much it is I will give it," said Vilcaroya, in the same tone. "No price will be too great for me to pay for that I wish for."

"It will be a matter of millions," said Djama that night to the Professor, as they were smoking their cigars under the electric light in the plaza in front of the Grand Hotel in Panama. Vilcaroya had gone to bed early, as he always did, in accordance with the ancient habits that he had not yet thrown off. Ruth was walking between them, listening with feelings that were not altogether pleasurable to their discussion of the prospective wealth which they expected to receive from the hands of the Inca. Her interest in him was an entirely human one, tinged strongly with romance, but completely free from the slightest admixture of cupidity, while theirs seemed to become more and more purely mercenary the nearer they got to the scene on which they believed their hopes would be realised.

"Don't you think, Laurens," she said, after a little pause, "that there is really something more than a mere mercenary interest in this? You never seem to me to realise all that it means to poor Vilcaroya himself.

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What a marvellous fate has befallen him; what hopes and fears must lie before him; and what great projects must be revolving themselves in his mind although he says so little about them. Surely the deliverance of these poor fellow-countrymen of his from the degradation that the Spaniards and their descendants have thrown them into, and even that dream of his of the restoration of the throne of his ancestors, is of vastly greater importance than any benefit that you and Professor Lamson may derive from it. Of course, I know this is very important to you, and it ought to be, but surely——"

"My dear Ruth," said her brother, taking hold of her hand and pulling it through his arm, "I am very glad you have just said what you have done, because it gives me an opportunity of saying something else that I have been wanting to say for some time. I am afraid you have been allowing yourself to drift into an interest in our friend that might lead to somewhat awkward complications. Of course, I don't mean to imply for a moment that you have any intention of falling in love with him, or anything of that sort; that would be something altogether too absurd, even for imagination; but what I mean is that this man is going into Peru with credentials, so to speak, which the descendants of his people will be perfectly prepared to recognise as supernatural.

"The power that he will wield over them when he once gets into communication with them will be simply illimitable. It will be the power of a God rather than of a man. They will go to death for him at a word, and if he is really capable of unearthing the lost treasures and rediscovering the gold and emerald mines, he will command a money-power that will enable him to carry fire and sword not only through Peru but perhaps the whole of South America. You know that more than seventy-five per cent. of the so-called armies of the South American Republics are almost wholly of Indian blood. They hate the white men, and they have never forgotten what the Spaniards did to their ancestors two or three hundred years ago. As a matter of fact, we are taking a firebrand into South America, and the result may be a blaze-up of the whole continent.

"Now, we want nothing to do in all this. We are not going to start revolutions and run the hazard of battle for the sake of restoring the throne of the Incas. Our business is simply to get as respectable a share as we can of the treasures that we shall have enabled him to recover, and then to get ourselves and our gold back to England with as little trouble and risk as possible. Don't you think that is a fair statement of the case, Lamson?"

Smoking their cigars under the electric light in the plaza.

"Yes, certainly I do," said the Professor, "granted also that I can pick up the material I want for my own reconstruction of the lost Inca civilisation; and that I have every hope of being able to do before the catastrophe occurs. After that, well, of course, the somewhat lurid picture you have painted will illustrate a most interesting page in contemporary history, but I really can't see that we shall be justified in figuring it."

"Well," said Ruth, a trifle sharply, "I suppose I must admit the worldly wisdom of what you say, but that's not my view of the case. If I may speak plainly, you have brought this man back out of the grave for your own purposes, perfectly fair and laudable in themselves, I admit; but still, I think there is something more than that to be considered. You have made yourselves responsible, not only to him, but, as I believe, to God and the whole world, for the life that you, Laurens, have recreated in some mysterious way, in defiance of all the known laws of nature. If he, as you say, proves to have the power of setting a whole continent in a blaze, and perhaps sacrificing thousands and thousands of lives, remember that, even if you have not made the torch, you have given him the power to make it and light it.

Came striding across a brightly lit patch.

"You know there is something more than the convenience of two or three private individuals to be considered when one deliberately interferes with the order of nature. If it had not been for you this man would have been dead, or perhaps I should rather have said, he would have remained dead. You will probably restore this wife of his to life as well. You know, because you and Professor Lamson have told me yourselves, that the Indians of Peru still believe that a descendant of the Incas is ruling somewhere among the unknown valleys of the interior. They have never given up the hope of a restoration of their empire, and here you are bringing back to them one of the old Incas themselves, and you have just said they will receive him almost as a God, as a king sent to them straight from the Mansions of the Sun, and yet you talk as lightly about setting a whole continent on fire as you would about restoring a lost heir to his estates."

Her brother was saved from the possibly difficult task of making a satisfactory reply to this little lecture by a diversion as unexpected as it was in some respects unwelcome. A tall, well-set-up figure, dressed in a Norfolk jacket suit of khaki and wearing a Terai hat, came striding across a brightly-lit patch on the asphalt with a hand outstretched. It stopped in front of the Professor, who was a pace or two in front of the others.

"Hullo, Lamson! what on earth are you doing in Panama again? I thought you had gone home to spend at least three years sorting out your treasures and writing another of those big books of yours about them. Where are you off to—down the Coast? Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought you were alone."

At this moment Ruth and her brother stopped about a yard from the Professor. An introduction was, of course, inevitable.

"Captain Hartness—Miss Ruth Djama, Dr. Laurens Djama, two friends of mine who are going with me—ah—yes—down the Coast."

As Ruth bowed and acknowledged the introduction she looked up under her eyelashes and caught a glimpse of a strong manly face with a rather fair moustache and close-clipped beard, a straight rather delicately-shaped nose, a pair of keen blue eyes under somewhat heavy eyebrows, a good deal darker than the moustache and beard. Later on, when she had an opportunity of revising her first impressions, she came to the conclusion that Captain Francis Hartness, late of Her Majesty's Light Dragoons, later still

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of His Highness the Khedive's forces, and presently unattached wanderer over the face of the earth, was about the manliest man she had ever seen.

"And what might you be doing here?" said the Professor, when the orthodox greetings had been got over. "I thought you were off lion hunting in Central Africa by this time."

A swim in the cool of the morning.

"Well, I did think of going there, as I told you last time I saw you, but I've heard on the best authority that there's going to be a frightful row in Peru before long, and like the soldier of fortune that you know I am just now, I'm going down to see if there's a respectable opening for a free lance. If not, I am thinking of going on into Chile, for the Chilians are bound to be at loggerheads with the Argentines over this frontier question before long, and I may find something to do down there. At any rate, as the Irishman said, 'I'm spoiling for a fight,' and just now South America seems to be the only promising field. I suppose you're going down by the *Imperial* to-morrow. In that case I shall have the pleasure of being a fellow-traveller."

"Yes," said the Professor, "we are. I suppose you'll be going ashore at Callao. We are going on to Mollendo, and up to the Lake. Possibly into Bolivia after that."

"I don't know," said the Captain. "It depends on what I hear at Callao. I may stop there or go on to Valparaiso. Are you alone, or have you any other friends in your party?"

"Er—no," replied the Professor, as Ruth thought, a trifle nervously. "We have, a—well, a friend with us who is rather an invalid. Indeed, I may say he is travelling under the medical care of the doctor here. The fact is, he is a wealthy Peruvian, mine-owner and that sort of thing, you know, who has been some time in Europe and is just recovering from a long and dangerous illness. He is going back to try the effect of the air of his native mountains. He belongs to one of the old pre-Spanish families. In fact, I believe he claims lineal descent from the Incas themselves. I suppose we shall meet to-morrow at breakfast, and then I shall be able to introduce you."

"Only, unfortunately," broke in Djama, who for the last few minutes had been longing to gag the Professor. "Our friend, my patient, I mean, speaks very little English and—ah—between ourselves, Captain Hartness, I may say that his malady to a certain extent is a mental one. He suffers from illusions, you know, and that sort of thing. He is a great deal better than he was, but still his faculties are not quite on the proper balance yet. He is very deeply interested in the past history of Peru, and sometimes mixes himself up with the old Incas. A curious delusion but perfectly harmless, but still I thought it better to tell you this at once because you see——"

"Oh, yes, I see perfectly," said the Captain. "Thanks, of course, as we shall be fellow-travellers for some days it is as well to know that. Curious things these delusions, aren't they? I knew a poor fellow in Egypt who got sunstroke and went home under the firm impression that he was the Mahdi, and was being sent to England to be tried for his life. By the way, Professor, talking about Incas, how is that wonderful mummy you found somewhere up country? You know, the one you showed me when I met you in Arequipa."

"Oh, ah—perfectly well," he half stammered; "that is to say, of course, I mean as right as a mummy can be. Wonderful specimen, wasn't it? I never was so proud of a find in all my life."

"Now, I suppose you are going out to find some more like it if you can," said the Captain, holding out his hand again. "Well, good-night, it doesn't do to keep late hours in the tropics, and we shall have to be off early in the morning. Hullo, where's Miss Djama? I hope I haven't frightened her away by my sudden intrusion."

"My sister is a bit nervous of the bad character she has heard of the night air in Panama," said the Doctor, who was no less surprised than the Professor at his sister's disappearance; but he didn't show it. "Well, good-night Captain, I suppose we shall meet at breakfast. Confound the fellow," he muttered, as soon as Hartness was out of earshot. "I wonder what unlucky fate brought him here just now? Look here, Lamson, can this friend of yours speak Spanish?"

"Yes," said the Professor, "like a native. Why do you ask?"

"Great Heavens, man, can't you see? Why, he'll knock the bottom out of that story of yours before he has known his Highness ten minutes. You've told him that Vilcaroya is a Peruvian mine-owner, and that sort of thing, and he doesn't know two words of Spanish. Phew—I shall have to think of a way out of this fix before breakfast, or we shall have somewhat of a scene."

When they got back to the hotel they found that Ruth had gone to bed without saying her customary good-night to either of them.

CHAPTER VI.

MORNING REFLECTIONS.

THE next morning Captain Hartness was up before daybreak, and took a boat out into the bay for a swim in the cool of the morning. Not everyone would have run so great an apparent risk, but he was familiar enough with tropical waters to know that sharks usually give a good swimmer a wide berth, and very seldom attack anyone who is not in distress. He got back to the hotel about nine, and the first person he met was the Doctor, who was evidently on the look out for him. He came out of the entrance hall and shook hands with much more cordiality than he had shown the night before, and said:

"Ah, Captain Hartness, well met! To tell you the truth, I have been waiting for you. Of course you have heard that the *Imperial* is not going to sail until twelve, so we have plenty of time for a half-past nine breakfast, which I've ordered for the four of us, and then to go on board comfortably. Now, come and have a cocktail. I have something to tell you which ought to be told before breakfast."

"*Bueno!*" said the Captain, little knowing how the Spanish word jarred on his companion's ears. "I'm just your man, for a cocktail is the very thing I was thinking about."

Sat down at an isolated table in the big bar-room.

They went and sat down at an isolated table in the big bar-room, which opens out into the plaza, and as soon as the waiter had brought the cocktails and left them Djama lifted his glass with the usual "*salud!*" drained it, and put it down again. The Captain followed suit, and then Djama put his elbows on the table and said in a low, confidential tone:

"I want to tell you something about my patient which I forgot to tell you last night. It is due both to yourself and him, and that you should know it before you meet

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him, as you will do in half an hour or so, at breakfast, for it may save some awkwardness and possible unpleasantness. I told you last night that he has been a great invalid, and that his malady is party mental. He's perfectly harmless and quite rational, saving only as regards that curious illusion of his about the Incas, but, in addition to this, during his illness he has utterly forgotten his native language, and with it, in fact, his own identity. The result has been that since his partial recovery he has picked up a little English, just as a child might. Like many people who are partially insane, he is intellectually very active, and he is learning English fast. Of course, when he gets back home he will begin to pick up Spanish again; but neither Lamson nor myself speak Spanish with sufficient fluency to feel justified in letting him acquire a corrupt accent from us, so we invariably speak to him in English. You speak Spanish quite fluently, I believe?"

"Yes, pretty well; but like most Englishmen, you know, I prefer to speak my own language. In fact, I never speak any other unless I am obliged to; so, of course, what I have to say to your patient I shall say in English, and you may rely upon me, Doctor, to have every respect for his unfortunate infirmities. By the way, as regards his illusion, I suppose you have to humour it a little in the usual way?"

"Oh, yes; you know, nothing is more dangerous in these cases than irritation, and nothing irritates anyone suffering under an illusion more than displaying any incredulity. In fact, we go so far as to converse with him, privately, of course, as though the illusion were actually true. You see, it doesn't really matter; the great thing is to get his physical health perfectly restored first, and then trust to healthy, natural surroundings to gradually destroy the illusions. When others are present we never mention it; but as you are a friend of Lamson's, and will probably be with us a good deal, I thought it only due to you to put you *au fait* with the circumstances."

"Thanks very much. I am exceedingly obliged to you, for I have no doubt you have saved me from making some howling mistake which might have had serious consequences. Have another? No? Well I suppose you are right. You know what they say out here? One cocktail's just enough, two are too many, and three are not half enough. It's an insidious drink, and that's the way it takes you. Ah, here's Lamson and your sister, and—eh! Good God, no, of course, it couldn't be. What a fool I am!"

"What's the matter?" said Djama, slipping his hand under his arm as if to stop him.

"Oh, nothing; I—ah; oh, of course, I suppose that's your patient, is it? The man with the bronze skin and Inca eatures. I thought I had seen him before, that's all."

As he spoke the Captain walked off, followed by Djama, who had turned a trifle paler than his wont, towards the archway through which he had seen Ruth, the Professor, and Vilcaroya, standing in the vestibule. As the Professor introduced him to the Inca, and he shook hands with him, he gave him a quick, keen glance which only Ruth noticed, and said half to him and half to her:

"I am more than honoured to make the acquaintance of one who bears so ancient and honourable a name, and who, as far as appearance goes, might be the very Vilcaroya of the legend, saving only the dress, if the lapse of the centuries didn't make that impossible."

Vilcaroya shot an inquiring glance at the Professor, and said in Quichua, before Djama could do anything to stop him:

"Have you told the stranger my story?"

"No," replied the Professor, in the same tongue. "I should not do that unless you first consented."

"It is good," replied the Inca. "I will think."

Whether or not the Captain saw anything peculiar in this little dialogue, or whether he recognised the language in which it was conducted, he was too well bred to show it. He had got into conversation with Ruth, and she saw something like a passing flash of surprise or recognition come into his eyes and vanish again in a moment. The conversation then, as at breakfast, was strictly confined to generalities, and Vilcaroya took a very limited share of it, yet using his still rather scanty vocabulary with wonderful judgment and correctness.

Meanwhile, under the surface of the conversation, several hidden under-currents of thought were running in different directions. Ruth was thinking, with a vexed apprehension, of the terrible prospect which the conversation in the Plaza had called up. She was wondering, too, what part this newly-arrived friend of the Professor was going to take in the work in hand. Her instinct told her that he would inevitably play some part, and that possibly a very conspicuous one; for she had already recognised that his was one of those quiet, strong, masterful spirits which enter deliberately upon great enterprises, risking everything to attain their object with quiet calculation, which takes the extremest dangers as the necessary and inevitable risks of the game.

"I thought I had seen him before, that's all."

He was a soldier by profession and a soldier of fortune by choice. Her womanly intuition instantly connected him with the Inca's dream of a restored empire. He was, no doubt, well versed in all the arts of modern war. He was brave, daring, and ambitious; the Professor had already told her that during a long chat before breakfast. What if he were to gain Vilcaroya's confidence, as he well might? The Inca was a perfectly free agent, and could choose what friends or allies he pleased. The one tie between him and the Professor and her brother was the finding and restoration of Golden Star. That accomplished, he would no doubt fulfil his promise as to the hidden treasures in whose existence she implicitly believed, and there would be an end to their connection.

Beyond this point her thoughts somehow refused to run; they were checked by a strange unwillingness to pursue the subject any farther.

Meanwhile her brother was fuming inwardly, and wondering what he could do to prevent any confidential intercourse between Vilcaroya and this most unwelcome intruder, as he perhaps naturally considered the soldier to be, for he, too, saw just as quickly as his sister had done how far-reaching might be the consequences of an understanding between them.

Francis Hartness was avowedly going out to South America to find work as profitable as possible for his sword. To Djama he was an adventurer pure and simple, and what more profitable work could such a man find than that which he knew perfectly well Vilcaroya was contemplating?

This work involved a racial war which might spread from end to end of the continent, and which would certainly cost enormous sums of money—an expenditure which by no means chimed in with the bargain that he had made with the Professor, who at that moment was trying to satisfy himself as to the wisdom of admitting Hartness into the secret, and the possibility or otherwise of keeping it from him.

As for the Captain, his mind, accustomed to prompt and independent action, was swiftly analysing the characters of his new acquaintances, and weighing the possibilities of the truth or falsehood, whole or partial, of the undoubtedly strange story that had been told to him; but under this lay another stratum of thought, which he was reserving for

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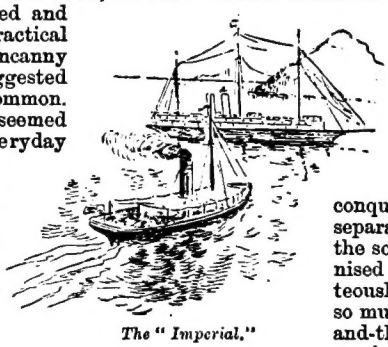
future and more deliberate consideration, of which the subjects would be Ruth and Vilcaroya.

Ruth he was already prepared to like and trust, if need be, as much as he instinctively disliked and distrusted her brother. To his clear, practical vision there was something occult and uncanny about this man—something that suggested knowledge and power far out of the common. Those dark mesmeric eyes of his always seemed to be looking over the boundaries of everyday things, and his conversation always seemed to suggest the idea that, while he was talking on one subject, he was thinking of something very different.



The "Imperial."

Then there was this curious patient of his with the physiognomy, half-Phœnician, half-Indian, that he had seen among the natives of the Cuzco district, and yet infinitely more refined and intellectual. Where had he got the light bronze of his skin, the high-bred delicacy of his features, the soft, glossy brown of his hair and that unmistakable light of a strong intellect which shone in his eyes, and where, above all, had he got that marvellous resemblance to the lifeless, long-dead mummy that the Professor had shown to him in Arequipa?

These were the points over which he had already promised himself some hours of quiet reflection as the *Imperial* was going southwards over the smooth, sunny waters of the Pacific, and the result of those reflections might probably make a considerable difference, not only in his immediately future course of action, but in the whole work of his life. He didn't just then know how or why, but his instinct told him that it might be so.

As for Vilcaroya himself, as he did least of the talking, he probably did most of the thinking. Like all of his caste, he had been trained to war from his boyhood, and had led many a troop in the armies of the great Inca to victory and conquest, and, in spite of the centuries that separated their two ages and their two worlds, the soldier spirit within him had already recognised its kinship with this strong and courteously spoken soldier who had seen war made so much more terrible by those strange flame-and-thunder weapons of which he had heard much since his awakening, and which he all too vividly remembered as one of the causes of the sudden downfall of the empire of his ancestors.

Such then were the various states of mind in which the momentous little party embarked at noon that day on board the *Imperial*, which an hour later left her anchorage off the island of El Morro and started on her southward voyage with a cargo of possibilities of which her captain and crew had very little idea.

(To be continued.)

IN THE REDWOODS.

THERE were three of us sitting in one of the luxurious corridors of the Bath Hotel, Bournemouth. I was the only Englishman of the party. The girl opposite me was an American; her companion came from Southern Africa, and the three continents were represented. I had finished my story, and the miner had fallen to and capped it with ease. Then we both looked at the American. She shook her head and laughed. "I don't know one," she said. "I don't know how to begin."

"It was——" I suggested.

"It was the night of November 25th, 1880. The moon, half spent, rose over the long unbroken range of mountains that extends along the Northern coast of California from Bodega Inlet to Humbolt Bay—How's that for a beginning?"

"Capital!" we said together. "Go on." She resumed:

"Perhaps an hour before midnight, a young girl stood in the doorway of a deserted cabin, far up in the Russian River cañon, watching the east grow light, and waiting for the moon to rise. A trail, half obliterated by the growth of underbrush and fallen trees, ran a few yards in front of the cabin, and led on down the cañon to the camp. By the light of the moon this trail would be plainly visible at a place a quarter of a mile higher up the mountain where it crossed a clearing in the redwoods; and towards this spot the girl's face was turned.

"She was alone, and seemed impatient for the coming light, which lingered so long among the tall trees on the summit of the range. A cloak, black and long, and from its shape evidently a 'gentleman's,' was thrown over her shoulders, and its hood covered her head. No sound stirred the deep stillness of the forest, save, now and then, the cry of some mountain cat. She had played with mountain cats; why should they frighten her? Yet she shuddered at the cry. It was so near. Even the creaking of a board, as she stepped back a little into the cabin, startled her.

"Then she drew the cloak closer about her and stepped out.

"The moon had risen. It looked like a great fire among the redwoods before it came up from their midst, but now all the cañon was flooded with its light. The trail which Mal had been straining her eyes to see through the darkness now showed clearly where it came from a thick growth of chaparral, and she watched its stretch across the clearing more earnestly than ever. She had not long to wait, for soon the man for whom she was looking issued from the brush. He was on horseback, and a riderless horse followed him. At the centre of the clearing he stopped and discharged a small revolver.

"Mal's heart leaped. 'All is right,' she said slowly to herself; but her conscience told her all was wrong, and she burst into sobs.

"'Poor dad, he'll never take me back—an' Ben, an' Jim. Oh, I know he'll never do it! But if he don't,' she said, between her teeth, 'I've seen folks die, an'—an'——' But a pair of strong arms were round her, and that voice which had led her so far was calling her his Mal, his

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sweet Mal, his little Mal, and asking her if tears were all she had for him.

"Her arms sought his neck, and she begged him not to be angry. 'I won't cry no more,' she said imploringly. 'Promise never to be angry with me again.'

"'And now, Mal,' he said, 'we must be getting out of here. We'll cross the river and stop at Jim's.'

"'No, no, no,' she begged, 'not at Jim's. Jim would know something was wrong, an'—an', he might *kill* you,' she whispered.

"'Well, if you can stand it, we'll cross the range and stop in one of the old logging camps to-night. To-morrow we'll go on to Sonoma.'

"'Oh, I can stand it,' she said. 'I've been there with dad lots o' times; only *please* don't stop at Jim's.'

"Her lover was looking at her attentively. 'Do you know, Mal, you look divine in that coat of mine? I shall have to will it to you,' he said, with a little laugh. It was a forced laugh, but it was just as sweet to Mal, and when he lifted her into the saddle she clung to his neck until he had kissed her many times, and called her over and over again by all those sweet names that love makes up for its ornaments. Then he threw himself upon his own horse, and in single file, he leading, down into the depths of the cañon they departed.

"The trail which they followed had once been used as a log-way. On each side rose the giant redwoods, towering high and dark. In the dense part of the forest, where the moon only shone on the higher branches of the trees, they looked like grey crested phantoms. Stirred by the light wind, they seemed to breathe a sigh as Mal passed beneath them; and Mal answered them with a sigh from her own heart.

"Among these trees had been her home. Their every sound and look, in pleasant and fearful weather, she knew; and now she was leaving them—was it for ever?

"Shortly they came to the old camp, where she had spent so many happy hours watching the huge logs thin themselves out into timber, and seeing the great saw spin round and round. Perhaps some of that very timber which she had seen cut had gone to the city to help build *his* house, the house which he had told her was to be hers. Thus she thought on, until leaving the camp they descended into the creek bed, and followed on down towards the river. They could hear it rippling over the stones at the crossing.

"Then they passed Jim's. It was so strange, she thought, to go by Jim's without stopping; Jim, who had rescued her from drowning when she had attempted to cross to his cabin during the rising of the river, the fall before; Jim, who was almost as dear as her own father, and so much gentler; Jim who loved her so.

"'Jim!' she called aloud.

"Her lover halted, startled at the sudden cry, and came to her.

"'I didn't mean to do that,' she said. 'It came out—I couldn't help it. I was thinking so much of him, and wishing I might just say good-bye to him, that it slipped out all of a sudden.'

"A mile beyond Jim's, they came into the trail again, just where it commenced its upward climb into the redwoods of the coast range. An hour later, at the edge of the woods of El Diablo, they reached the cabin where they were to spend the night. Here they dismounted, and Mal's lover led the horses into the brush, while she, not the least afraid, pushed open the door of the dark and vacant hut.

"There was a close and stifling odour within, from the old and musty straw scattered over the bunk in the corner. A wild cat jumped out through the window. Mal gave a little start. She sat down on the edge of the brush, where she could see her lover loosening the saddle girths. Once more she thought of her home, far back at the head of the Russian river. That dear old river—how it pained her to leave its soft ripple, and its blue, clear waters, and her 'dad,' and Jim, and her brothers. Thoughts of them all came surging up from her heart. She hid her face in her hands and burst into sobs. So long as *he* was with her she was happy; but alone, how troubled she grew!

"Some strips had been torn from the roof of the cabin, and through the opening a little moonlight fell upon her. When she raised her face it was very white. The hood had partially fallen from her head, and one of her locks of ruddy hair had shaken itself loose from the knot into which it had been tied, and had slipped down upon her shoulder. Her lover kissed her when he came. Then all was changed, and her heart leapt with joy.

"'You are not sorry, my sweet one, you came, are you?' he said to her tenderly.

"She looked up at him. 'Why do you always think I'm sorry? I *ain't* sorry; only dad—dad 'll miss me, and I know he'll never take me back,' she said; 'an' Jim—Jim'll miss me too.'

"'I'm afraid you're getting tired of *my* love,' he said.

"'No, no, I'm not. I won't speak of them again. I won't, I won't,' she cried, clinging closer to him and trying to stop the heavy sobs which *would* come, even when he had told her, all over again, how much she was to him. 'An' you'll marry me when we get to the city, won't you?' she asked.

"But he turned his head away, and she could not see the look that came into his face.

"'My dear Mal, why do you cry so? You know I love you. Rest your head here and go to sleep. I will wake you when it's light.'

"So, with a sigh, her head dropped upon his shoulder, and Mal went to sleep.

"The moon had risen a little higher. It shone full upon Mal's face, and her lover kissed her. 'One would almost take her for a man in this coat of mine,' he said to himself, 'but how sweet her face is,' and another caress told him how sweet, indeed, it was."

The girl left off and laughed a little consciously. She had been carried away by the interest of the story. We begged her to continue. We were enthralled by her simple, weird style. She began again:

"A cool breeze had sprung up from the coast, and was bringing a heavy fog with it. For some time Mal's lover watched it through a break in the trees, as it came rolling in over the range and settled down in a cloud over the Russian river valley. Then he must have fallen asleep, but only for a moment. He awoke with a little start, and under the impression that he had heard voices. He listened. The wind was stirring the dead leaves and moaning among the trees. Was it only the wind he had heard? Gently he laid Mal down upon the bunk, and drew the hood around her face. He stepped to the window and listened again.

"Still there was only the sound of the wind. Yet he was sure he had heard other voices than those of the forest. Yes, he was right. Presently there came to him the sound of crackling brush. Some one was coming. Yes, now he caught a glimpse of some half dozen horsemen on the trail.

"'Heavens! Her father's horse and Jim's,' he

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breathed. 'They're after me; they'll lynch me if they catch me!'

"He glanced hastily at Mal, kissed her softly—it must be his last, he knew—then out through the door, into the long grass, upon his horse, and away.

"The men coming up the trail heard him crash through the brush in the distance, but thought it some deer, startled at their approach.

"A little distance from the cabin the men halted and dismounted. Their leader was Mal's father. He went softly to the window and looked in. The figure in the black coat caught his eye. Fury seized him at the thought that it was the abductor of his child. It was all he cared for, to have his vengeance upon *him*. He did not look to see if Mal was there too. He did not think of her. His passion for revenge had mastered him.

"He beckoned to the men. There were six of them. They crept stealthily through the open door, Jim and Mal's father a little in advance of the rest. For one moment they hesitated, then threw a heavy sack about the sleeping figure, and drew it tight round the feet and neck with ropes. It was quickly done. There was a half smothered cry, a brief struggle, and the men bore their burden away in the redwoods.

"The moon hid itself behind some dark clouds. The foggy winds ceased sobbing among the trees, and all the voices of the deep forests were hushed. By the sound of a distant whistle they knew it was near morning.

"A few yards from the trail they stopped. A rope was run up over the projecting limb of a huge tree, and its noose passed to Jim to fasten. The others knelt upon the struggling, prostrate figure to quiet it. With a quick jerk Jim loosened the cords that had held the sack close about the shoulders and neck, and slipped the noose over in their stead.

"'A'ready,' he breathed. The men got off the body. There was a sound as of rope running over hard bark, and Jim and Mal's father lifted the figure to a standing posture.

"A moment the men hesitated. For an instant the noose slackened its grip. Life and sense and thought rushed back to Mal with that breath, and the stillness of the redwoods awoke to the skriek of her voice calling: 'Jim! Jim! Jim!'

"The figure in the sack fell heavily to the ground. The terror of the woman's voice came over the men. They stood speechless. Again Mal called. But it was only a moan—'Jim, Jim!'

"Now they bestirred themselves. They tore open the sack, and freed Mal from the cloak and the smothering hood. Jim knelt to hold her.

"'And he, where is he? He, your man?' they shouted.

"Mal shook her head.

"One of the men spoke up excitedly: 'The crackling brush we heard! He saw us, he was off. We can——'

"But without the words the fact had communicated itself to them. They were mounted in a moment, and off down the trail, Jim alone remaining with Mal.

"The two listened to the mad clatter of hoofs over the stony trail, until they died away in the distance. Jim was still kneeling by the girl's side. He put his hand on her shoulder.

"'Do yo' love him so, girl?' he said.

"But Mal only gripped his arm tightly and leant forward to listen more intently.

"'He may get away, girl, he may. Do yo' hope he will?'

"Mal looked at the man.

"'Jim,' she said firmly, 'they must get him; they must kill him. I hate him—he ran away!'

"But even now Mal's lover lay in the road a mile down the trail—dead! though not by the vengeance of those who sought to kill him. Fast to his boot were a stirrup and a broken strap; the saddle he had had no time to tighten had turned in his mad race for life, and he had been dragged over the rocks of El Diablo. The men found him as morning broke, grey and dull, through the white, damp fog that was coming in thicker and thicker among the redwoods. Like a shroud for the dead came the fleecy clouds, and wrapping their mantles of white about the great trees, obliterated all before them."

The girl stopped. We both looked at one another, and said, "Thank you," in the same breath. It was beautiful.

Jerome Bull.

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The Picture and the Conscience.

Some three or four years ago the scientific and social world of Paris was astonished and shocked by the news that Doctor Emile Paul, the famous specialist on mental diseases, had died by his own hand.

At the same time it was announced that Madame Revallon, the widow of the well-known magistrate, had retired to a convent with the intention of taking the veil.

Society connected the two paragraphs mysteriously, for Emile Paul was an old friend of the late magistrate, and strange rumours floated about for the traditional nine days. Then new sensations cropped up and the matter was forgotten.

* * * * *

I was lately exploring that part of Paris where Jew dealers and picture brokers most do congregate, and amongst other curiosities I observed a frameless portrait of a red-robed magistrate; but, strange to say, the robe was slashed and torn, as by reckless stabs of a knife, and, stranger still, the eyes had been cut out neatly, leaving two round holes in a smooth, grinning face.

The effect was hideous—so much so that I hardly dared to look at the thing a second time; but my curiosity was awakened.

I was about to enter the shop in order to make inquiries concerning the canvas, when an old friend and fellow student laid his hand on my shoulder, and said:

"I saw you looking at that thing. Is it not hideous? The history of that portrait will interest you, a student of the human passions. Come to my room. I have three letters which tell the whole story. You shall read them."

I accompanied him to his rooms. He opened an old-fashioned desk, and produced the three following letters:

First Letter.

"Monday, August 20th.

"My dear Verdon,—How fruitful of sad events the last three months have been. My mother gone, my brother maimed and disabled for life, and now poor Revallon gone! Helen in mourning—and how pretty she looks! She weeps continually. Poor Helen! She sees no visitor except myself, but there is no whisper of scandal. Why should there be? Am I not one of her late husband's oldest friends? She receives me in the little blue room as of old—there hangs the portrait of her husband in his magisterial robes. You know the portrait—the likeness is excellent—it has caught his expression to perfection. You know that clean-shaven face, with those mocking, cruel, cold steel-grey eyes, those cynical, sneering lips. But the eyes, the eyes, they have in them that strange yellow light which I so well remember and so hated while he lived. How I longed to see them closed for ever! How I longed to finish that hateful, piercing stare! But he is gone! Dead! Buried! Yet that terrible portrait, with the piercing, yellow rayed eyes, haunts us, tortures us, freezes the very kisses on our lips. I hate them! I hate them!

"At night Helen locks her bedroom door, for she imagines that he will leave the canvas and come to seek her. When he was alive we had no fear of discovery; now that he is dead he pursues us with horrible persistency.

"He seems to have waited so that his vengeance might be the more awful. We have obtained the freedom for which we longed, but it is worse than discovery itself.

"In six months we shall be married; we shall then realise the dream of the fevered days when he lived—— But no! no! that dream is unrealisable, because the ghost of the past rises up between us, real and living, with steel-grey eyes.—Emile."

Second Letter.

"Friday, August 30th.

"My dear Friend,—Thanks for your letter. Yes, I know, it is nerves, all nerves! But, Verdon, the dead have their revenge. Every day I take the train to Bas Meudon, not to see Helen, but—to see him, the dead husband whom I loathed in life, because he lived, and whom I loath in death, because he has not died. I go there because I must; I am drawn thither—I know not why—but—go I must.

"In the little room where we sit with our eyes fixed on the same object, for we gaze always on the staring portrait in spite of ourselves, it hypnotises us with its evil smile, and we cannot escape it; many a weary hour passes. We rise and move to another part of the room, but the eyes follow us, haunt us, look into our very souls.

"Then I cry out, 'Who accuses me?' and I falter, 'It was a mistake—a mistake!' Poisons form a dangerous part of medical science. I did not—I do not believe I poisoned him. I know he did die of poison—but it was an error. I did not want him to die.

"Oh! those eyes, those eyes which I hate and which I go to see every day, without even speaking to Helen, who, pale with terror, implores me to calm myself, to have pity on her sufferings. She sees a new light in my eyes—a new light which frightens myself, when, by chance, some glass reflects my fevered countenance.

"That portrait—I have asked Helen to remove it, but she replied:

"'Impossible! What would people say? And, if I did—it would be useless. He would come—all the same.'

"She is right. Sleeping or waking, he haunts me. I cannot escape from him.—Your unhappy Emile."

Third Letter.

"September 5th.

"My dear Friend,—All is over. I have cut out those two eyes with my scalpel. The steely, serpent-like orbs are gone, and in their place there are two empty holes. At last, at last! I held them in my hands and crushed them. Crushed them until I buried my nails deep in my own flesh. Ah! they would leer no more; they were finished now; the hideous yellow light was extinguished for ever. Now could I rest, for I had annihilated the sneer—the penetrating, insolent, prying sneer which maddened me. But was it so? I looked once more on the red-robed portrait, and then, oh, merciful heavens! I saw—I saw that the empty holes still glared with a strange unholy light; and I shrieked aloud like a wild beast, and fell upon the picture, slashing at it and cutting at it with my scalpel. I was mad—mad with the most terrible madness—that which reasons.

"This is my last letter. Before you receive it I shall be dead—dead before the empty and accusing sockets which arraign and find me guilty of foul murder.—Your miserable Emile."

H. B.

THE BACHELOR BROTHERS

Or, BLOOD WILL TELL.

"*From John Ernest Moncton, Havre, to James Cyril Moncton, London*:

"Sail to-morrow. Have Tom Lander and his little girl in tow. Will visit us."

James Moncton read and re-read the cablegram. He was pleased, very pleased, indeed, at the prospect of seeing his brother fully a month earlier than he had expected to enjoy that pleasure. But Lander—poor old Tom Lander! What a host of queer memories the mere mention of that well-remembered name served to conjure up.

Both he and his brother knew him well; the scapegrace at school, though by all odds the best fighter in it; the wild young man-about-town scattering a none too generous fortune to the winds; the shiftless ne'er-do-well, as the more censorious of his friends were apt to term him; and lastly, the Quixotic idiot who had quite estranged himself from society by a chivalrous marriage to a girl of obscure birth.

But that was many years ago, and the scapegrace's old schoolfellow pushed the grey hair abstractedly back from his temples as he wondered how the scapegrace would look after his long sojourn abroad, and whether he had quite recovered from the loss of the wife who had caused his social downfall in his youth, but whom, as John Moncton very well knew, poor old Tom had idolised as the very apple of his eye.

After a long period of pleasant thought, this handsome and warm-hearted old bachelor rang for the smug-faced but wholly correct gentleman that served himself and his brother as a valet. "Benson," he said briskly, "Mr. John will be home to-morrow. Get his rooms ready, and also prepare rooms for a friend of mine and his little girl who are to visit us. Tell the housekeeper they must be made as comfortable as possible."

The house that the brothers occupied in Russell Square was big enough to have accommodated a trio of Tom Landers, with a following of half-a-dozen "little girls" apiece. There was no fear that the visitors would not be made comfortable.

James Moncton felt as fit as a two-year-old colt as he drove down to the station to meet the train. It was a lovely spring day, and he really longed to see his brother, for between these two there existed a great and enduring affection.

But his countenance fell as he espied his travellers descending on to the platform. Tom Lander leant heavily on his brother's arm and smiled in an aimless and unrecognising sort of way as he shook hands with the waiting James. There was that in his face that one instantly recognises as the look of a poor beggar whose earthly race is pretty nearly run.

James exchanged meaning glances with his brother, and led the way to the carriage. Then for the first time he recognised "the little girl" who followed, demurely enough, behind.

The face was that of a child of, perhaps, fifteen, but the figure, which was the very perfection of grace, that of an almost fully-developed woman. Her eyes and hair were deepest black, and her mouth as red and full as a ripe cherry. When they had entered the vehicle she leant her head on her father's shoulder. He, poor fellow, gazed vacantly out of the window at the stirring scenes of the streets and muttered softly to himself now and then.

Arrived at the house, Tom and his daughter were shown to their rooms by Benson, whose parchment visage almost lost its habitually dead expression at the sight of this exquisite child. Then the brothers had their talk.

"How long has Tom been like that?" asked James, with a suspicious tremble in his voice.

"He's been getting worse ever since *she* died," answered John. "You know—although you must never let him know *we* either of us know it—she went to the bad two years before the end."

"How are his affairs?"

"He has none. He's absolutely without a penny. I thought"— and Mr. John Ernest Moncton looked lightly self-conscious—"that we'd give him a bed here till—till the end, you know. Poor Tom! It won't be very long."

"I agree with you," acquiesced his brother, "but what are you going to do with the young woman?"

"Young woman!" exclaimed John, amazed, "why she's only a child."

James eyed his brother with the suspicion of a twinkle in his kind eye. "Study her a little more closely, old man," he advised. "I fancy she is about as old as she looks."

The doctor gave Tom Lander a month to live. While half unconscious of his surroundings most of the time, he had comparatively lucid intervals, at which time he would play poker with his two faithful old friends for enormous sums, that he fancied were being added to his bank account as soon as won. The end came very suddenly and very peaceably at one of these card parties. Tom laid his hand carefully on the table and leant back in his chair, closing his eyes. Then he opened those poor tired orbs, and the brothers saw there were tears in them. He was sensible at last. "Boys," he said, very gently, "take care of the little one. She's of bad stock, perhaps, but—Marie!" His slender, nervous hand went suddenly to his throat, and his eyes closed again and didn't open.

The girl's grief was heartrending. After the funeral she kept her rooms for days, and had to be almost forced to take nourishment. Then, one bright morning,

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John coaxed her into his dog-cart, and when they returned her white cheeks had a little pink spot in each of them. The same week James took her to a *matinée*, and she began to recover her spirits.

These two lonely bachelors now had something to live for. They could not have lavished more kindness upon her if she had been a princess, instead of being the daughter of a dead gambler. Her wardrobe was replenished handsomely, and a corps of teachers was engaged for her. In the evenings she would sit on a footstool on the hearthrug between them and chatter away like a linnet, or sing some funny little French songs that sometimes, alas, were not so proper as they should have been. Though, as neither of these two old chaps knew the language very well, it did not matter much.

Only Benson, who used to appear with the decanters just before the young lady's hour for retiring, used sometimes to allow his face to break into a smile after leaving the library. Benson had once been in the service of the Baron Chevriac, in Paris, you see.

It was perhaps worthy of notice that these quiet evenings were the only occasions on which the three remained together. It was generally John that took Estelle—that was her name—to drive in the afternoon, and James that escorted her to theatres or concerts in the evenings. And while it could hardly be said as yet that there was any jealousy between the brothers, when either of them happened to come home with a pet plan in his kind old head for her pleasure, it was annoying to find her out somewhere with the other.

As for Estelle, she soon became as gay and light-hearted as a bird. She sang and romped about the house with her dogs and kittens, poked fun at the leather-faced Benson, and played all manner of funny pranks on the venerable housekeeper, which dear old soul, of course, adored her to distraction. She was like a perpetual sunbeam, and both her old guardians began to wonder how they could ever have existed without her.

But one day James came to John with a troubled look on his face. "Brother," said he earnestly, "I think it's about time we were sending Estelle away somewhere."

The other stared. "What on earth for?" he ejaculated.

"She's growing very fast, you know," said James, "and if you must know, people are talking."

"Then let the beasts talk!" exclaimed his brother angrily. "Don't worry, James, we both love the child. In Heaven's name, let's keep her with us as long as we can."

Perhaps James was secretly glad of his brother's state of mind. He had made his protest, and his conscience was at last clear. But, as evil fortune would have it, he returned home late that evening, and just in time to catch sight of a tableau that made him draw a long breath of envy.

It was nearly dark in the library, and Estelle was kneeling on the hearthrug at John's side. Moreover, as James entered, his brother was in the act of imprinting a kiss on the white forehead.

He stood stock still until Estelle, peeping out from beneath her tangle of black curls like a squirrel, espied him with a little shriek of dismay, rose and fled past him, and went flying upstairs. John rose, shame-faced and red, and, man-like, proceeded to try to brazen a bad thing out.

"Spying, eh?" he snapped.

"I did not think," said James rather brokenly, "that my brother could so far forget his duty to his dead friend."

"Who's forgotten his duty? Why, man, I won't let even you, my brother, insinuate——"

"Oh, of course not," sneered James, growing angry in his turn. Quite irrespective of the torture caused him by his brother's conduct, there was another sort of pain tugging at his brave old heart. You see, "the little girl" had been very just and impartial in her reception of the devotion of the two brothers. "I suppose, then," he went on, after a pause, "that you intend marrying her?"

"And suppose I do?" jerked out John; "whose affair is it?"

"In that case," answered James, with great gravity—"well, in that case, good-night, John!"

One brother sat for hours smoking by the light of the tall library lamp. The other took a long, long walk. He asked himself a score of times if it were really honest and moral indignation that he felt, or was it simply commonplace, wretched envy. He gave it up at length, and went to the club to sleep. And thus had the "little girl" succeeded in effecting the first break in a friendship of forty years.

* * * * *

Both brothers were extremely miserable for four days, though neither would have admitted it to the other under pressure of the rack and thumbscrew. Perhaps of the two James was the more thoroughly wretched, inasmuch as it was he that had declared war, and made a reconciliation, unless under the conditions imposed by himself, impossible.

On the morning of the fifth day he was rather surprised to receive an urgent request from his brother to meet him at the club. He was a little in doubt as to whether to go or not, but finally decided to do so. He found John seated at a table daintily set for two. There was a moment's embarrassed silence.

John spoke first. "Sit down, old man," said he, with a decidedly sheepish look, "and have some luncheon."

"Not yet," answered his brother very stiffly; "explain first, if you please."

These two foolish old fellows looked at each other wistfully for a moment, and then John said, looking more sheepish than ever: "Don't be an idiot, Jim; you can afford to sit down. The cause of the quarrel has disappeared." And he laughed nervously.

"What's that you say?" stammered James, growing rather white.

For answer his brother handed him a note written in Estelle's extremely regular hand.

"You dear old humbugs," it ran, "you'll feel it, but I am really not to blame. You see, I'm a Paris girl, and you are really slow, although you are both such sweet old gentlemen. I've taken Benson with me, because he amuses me. I know you won't mind the little I took with me. You'd have both of you given me much more for a wedding present. Please don't chase Benson. He got the money for me, and he's not a bad fellow. Good-bye. Come and see us in Paris."

"What on earth does she mean?" gasped James, as he laid down the letter.

"Only that I'm £5,000 poorer," answered John, with a blush. "You see, I was proud of her beautiful writing, and helped her to improve it."

"Ah!" sighed James, "it's in the blood, I suppose. Shall you follow them?"

"Not if you'll call it even," answered John, with a look of great affection across the table. "Really, after all, you know, I saw her first. But the luncheon's ready."

And they managed to make it a royal one.

MARY BRYAN.

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LO-TO-KAH & THE WITCH

ONE hot summer day, after leisurely exploring a quaint old Indian pueblo in New Mexico, I was resting in the shade of an adobe wall when I caught sight of a horseman riding towards the pueblo. Before he was near enough for me to discern his features I could see by his costume that he was no pueblo Indian, and as he rode through the narrow streets and came into the bare little plaza I recognised in him my friend Lo-To-Kah. He was very old, but he sat as erect on his horse as any warrior in the prime of life. When he saw me he rode to my side and called out:

"Ho, friend, vagrant *Merikotch* that you are, I come upon you in all places. I am glad to fall in with you this day, for I have ridden alone over many weary miles of the desert, and the face of a friend is a welcome sight to lonesome eyes. With whom do you abide in this place?"

I led the way to the house of Ho-leka, and Lo-To-Kah, who was well-known there, was received as a welcome and honoured guest. Food was spread, after which tobacco and corn leaves were brought, and then our old host and his family clustered about the room, and listened to the talk of the old wanderer until far into the night. Then, one by one, they went to their couches, until all were gone but Lo-To-Kah and myself. When we were left alone the old man sat in silence for a long time, and then he said:

"Now, friend of mine, will I tell you of Raymeya, the witch, as I promised to you when last we met.

"I am just come from Moqui—the land once known to the whites by the name af Tusayan—where I went to assist in the dread dance of the snakes. Although not a Moquino, I am a priest of the Antelope Order, and I was versed in the mysteries of the snake worship before thirty summers had come into my life.

"The spirits of birth gave me a wandering foot, and many times have I been absent from the snake dance because I was journeying in the far places of the world. But I went to the dance this year because it is likely to be the last one I shall ever see. My hold on life is now so feeble that when I close my eyes in sleep I know not whether I shall wake in this world of trouble or in the bright land of peace that lies beyond the grave.

"At the snake dance this year I saw Raymeya, the witch, and I say to you that she seemed as young and wondrously fair as she did at a time that is now more than fifty years in the past—a time when she came to me in the forest and besought me to love her. Ah, she is fair! Fairer than any woman that walks upon the earth to-day!

"You are to me a friend, and I believe I have a warm place in your heart. When I am gone from the earth I desire that you will remember me as a man who knew no fear, and as a man who spoke ever in true words.

"After I returned from the great raid against the Navajos I was treated with much honour by my people. War songs were sung about me, the children gazed upon me in awe, and my words were held in high esteem in the councils. I loved the honour and the praise, but more than all things else I loved Zeetah, my wife, and I would leave the councils and the dances and the games of the men to spend the time apart with her. Ah, *amigo mio*, never does a man know the fulness of life till he knows such love as I have known!

"One day in council the old chief of the clan to which I belonged arose in his place and said that he was old, and the days of his life were almost gone, and that before he was gone he desired to surrender his office to a man who was young and strong, and just and fearless, so that the years to come would be good years for his people. Then, while the warriors and the old men held their very breath in silence, he placed his hand upon my head, and asked me to be chief in his stead.

"I was but a youth then, señor; an honour had come to me that many aged men had sought through their lives without finding; but, instead of being pleased, I was so grieved that I almost wept. While I sat in silence, with my eyes cast down, the people began shouting:

"'Lo-To-Kah, the chief! Lo-To-Kah, the chief! We are the warriors of Lo-To-Kah, of the oaken heart, and no people can stand before us!'

"I embraced the old chief and thanked him, and I thanked the warriors who were willing to have me for chief; and then I told them that not yet would I consent to be their chief, but that in six days I would give them an answer. And then I left the council and went to Zeetah.

"We decided that I should go alone into the forest, away from her and away from my people, and there should meditate until I should be guided aright. And I took blankets and a bow and arrows, and I went alone into the depths of the forest.

"I went many miles, and when night came I built a fire and lay down by it to sleep. But I was so lonesome,

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and longed so much for my wife, that I was minded to go back in the night and tell the people I would not be their chief. But I did not go, and I slept till the sun came up, and then I killed game and cooked it, and sat down to meditate again.

"In this way the days and nights passed, until the sun had risen and set four times, and I had made no choice. Then the night came on again, and I sat by my fire and brooded. It was a night of moonlight, and multitudes of stars shone in the sky above me. Away in the far distance I saw the white-topped mountains that the Spanish people call the Mountains of Silver. Far behind me lay the peaceful valley where my people were encamped, and all about me were the numberless trees of the forest.

"While I sat there musing and gazing away at the mountains, I heard a soft step in the leaves behind me, and before I could fit an arrow to my bow, there stood before me as fair a woman as ever breathed the breath of life. She was a white-skinned woman, and she was clad in finer garments than had ever been seen in the lands of the Indians. Her dress was of white, clinging silk; a black *reboso* was over her head, and on her white neck, and round her arms, and on her fingers, were jewels of such wonderful brightness that scarce could I look upon them. The woman smiled as she gazed upon me, and she said:

"'You are Lo-To-Kah, and you are such a man as I had hoped you would be. I have journeyed great distances to meet you. I have arrayed myself so that I may seem fair in your eyes. Look upon me! Am I not more beautiful than any woman you ever saw?'

"I answered: 'You are arrayed in garments of greater beauty than any I ever saw. You wear stones in which are imprisoned the light of the sun and the splendours of the rainbow. You are fairer than any woman known to me, except Zeetah, my wife. What do you desire of me?'

"The face of the woman became somewhat sad when I spoke with such reverence of my wife, and she gazed upon me for a time in silence. Then she said:

"'Lo-To-Kah, I am the fairest woman upon the earth; and even time and the passing of years cannot mar my beauty. I am wise—wiser even than all of the oldest and wisest men of your tribe, or of all the Indian tribes under the sun. I am rich—so rich that all the wealth of your people would be but a bauble to me. I am great—so great that chiefs are my subjects. What think you of me now?'

"I gave answer that I thought the great Manitou had blessed her beyond all women, and again I asked what she desired of me, and she said:

"'But one thing do I lack, O, Lo-To-Kah, and that thing I seek from you. I am known to many of the greatest men in the world, and they seek me for lover or wife; but I care not for them, for they are proud, or vain, or false, or have the hearts of cowards. I long for a man in whose heart fear is not; a man who stakes his life upon his promise; a man who is so great that he can rule even me, who am a ruler.

"'Among tribes far from here I heard of you—for the fame of your deeds has travelled far—and I came to this land to seek you. I came disguised as a woman of your own nation, and when the people of your kind, who dwell in the North, came to this land to dance, I was with them. I have watched you since then; I have come to believe that you are the man of men, and now I seek from you the only thing my life needs to make it complete. The thing I seek from you is love.'

"Remember, señor, that at that time I had never journeyed among the white people; I knew not of their ways, and I thought of women in the way my people thought of them. Among my people a man is much greater than a woman, and, too, a man often has many wives. Many of the women of my nation had sought to be my wife, and the offer of the white woman did not then seem to me so great a thing as I now know it to have been. I answered her, and said:

"'In the encampment of my tribe there stands a *can-nee*, made of the hides of buffalo, that is larger than any of the other *can-nees*. In it dwells a woman who is fairer and dearer than any other woman of my nation. The *can-nee* is mine, and the woman is my wife. The woman is so dear to me that I have promised her, and have promised myself, to have no other wife than she. Many men in my tribe have more wives than one; and among our men are many who will be glad to take you. Go to them.'

"The woman gazed upon me with a strange look upon her face. She folded her arms, and stood for a time in silence, and then she said:

"'You are but a simple Indian, and you know not what you say. I would not live an instant in a *can-nee* with a man who had another wife. Who loves me must love me—only.'

"I answered: 'I love only Zeetah, my wife. No lips but hers have ever pressed my lips in love, and so it shall be till the day of my death.'

"Then was the woman angered, and she said: 'Fool, you know not what you say. I have untold wealth, great knowledge, great power. I can fulfil your every hope. Why am I not better for you than a wild Indian woman? I can take you to the ends of the earth; with me you can live in a palace and be attended by slaves. But if you care not for such things, I, too, will live with you as an Indian woman, if you will but cast off this Zeetah, and take me for your wife.'

"I answered the woman not at all; and then she seated herself by my side and told me she would always be young and fair. That failed; and then she told me a strange tale of the Sierra Madre Mountains, a city of wise Indians who had great houses and heaps of gold, and great wealth in such jewels as she wore.

"She said that she was the queen of that people, and if I would go with her I might be their king. Then she told me many tales of the far countries of the world, and of the great oceans, and of the mighty ships, and of the cities whose size is so great that they stretch away farther than the sight of a man can carry. She said she had seen all those places and lands and wonders, and would take me to them if I would go. But I still refused, and I would have refused if she had offered me the world and all it contains. The woman again became angered, and she said:

"'What, then, if this precious Zeetah of yours should die? Would you then refuse me?'

"My heart was filled with trouble, for I feared the woman might work harm upon my wife; and I told her that if as much as one hair upon my Zeetah's head was harmed, I would know it to be her work, and that I would seek her till I found her, and would kill her.

"The woman smiled, and told me I could not kill her. Then she became sad, and she gazed upon me a long, long time, and she spoke no word. But in time she roused herself, and said:

"'I have journeyed over the world seeking the man of men, and until I met you I had not found him. And

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now that I have found you, I learn in bitterness that you are not for me. Fear not for your Zeetah; I will do her no evil. See; I have here a charm that is revered among all Indians. If your Zeetah is ever in trouble I will lend her this, and thus show you that I hold your happiness even above my own.'

"From a fold in her robe the woman drew forth the dried dead body of a two-headed rattlesnake, a charm that is sacred among all Indians, no matter of what tribe they are. It is the holiest emblem we know, and fortunate is the man whose privilege it is to see it. A two-headed snake is born but once in a hundred years, and it is sent to earth by Chah-Now-Woof, the Great Spirit himself. While it lives it is devoutly worshipped, and when it is dead, its dried body is so potent a token that no Indian will harm any man or woman who has it. With such an emblem, *amigo*, you could journey to the uttermost ends of the lands that the Indians know, and all men would do you homage.

"With such an emblem I could journey through the heart of a land of foes, every warrior of which might be thirsting for my blood, and no harm would be done me. I asked the woman to allow me to touch the snake, for one had never been seen by any man of my tribe. And because I touched it is one of the reasons that life has gone so well with me.

"Then I asked the white woman her name, and when she told me I gazed upon her in awe and wonder, for the name she gave me was the name of the Great Witch of the South, whose fame is known to every Indian man of magic that dwells upon the earth. She said her name was Raymeya! When she spoke her name I cast down my eyes in reverence. And when I looked again the woman was gone. It seemed as though she had melted into the air. I did not see her again until more than five and twenty years had gone into the past.

"After the woman was gone I again meditated as to becoming chief, but six days passed and I had not made a decision. I returned to the encampment of my people, and before I had been there long, the question was decided for me. I found my people in great uproar, for a runner had come to the camp, bearing the tidings that a band of Apaches was coming down upon us, wearing their war paint, and saying they would wipe our warriors from the face of the earth, steal our horses, and take our women for slaves.

"I had not been in my *can-nce* an hour, when the warriors of my tribe came and called me, and told me I must be their chief, for the old chief was ill in his tent, and unless I guided them they would all be killed. Thus was the matter decided for me; my duty became greater than my desire, and I told the people I would be their chief.

"Then sacred *po-o-kante* was made by our men of medicine, war paint was donned, the feathers of eagles were fastened in our hair, and we danced the war dance and sang the old war songs of our people while we awaited the coming of the Apaches. It was not long till they came, but they came like snakes and not like men. They tried to deceive us, and cause us to follow a few of them in one direction, while the others stole upon us from behind our backs to kill us.

"I had fought battles with the Apaches before, and when a few of them fired arrows upon us from the south, I directed my men to stand firm and not to follow them. The numbers of the Apaches were very many, and soon they ceased trying to decoy us and charged down upon us, thinking we would flee before their great numbers and leave our women behind; but we stood side by side, as the white soldiers do when they fight, and we all shot our arrows at once.

"My men were brave, and they stood by me till many an Apache fiend had bit the dust; but soon the Apache fiends crowded upon us in such great numbers that my men were forced backwards step by step. Soon we had gone backward so far that we found we could not go farther without exposing our women and children to danger, and at that place I told my men to halt and fight till they were killed.

I rushed into the midst of the shrieking Apaches.

"Then we fought such a battle as was never before known even to the oldest men of my tribe. The Apaches are like reptiles, and they like not to stand on their feet and fight like men; but we killed so many of them that they went mad with anger, and they crowded upon us like hordes of demons.

"When the fight began I had with me a hundred young men. Soon ten of them were dead, then ten more, and then they fell dead about me as the trees fall in the face of a mountain storm. It seemed to me that soon we should all be killed, and I thought of the Apaches bearing away our women to make slaves of them.

"I thought of my Zeetah being forced to dwell with some Apache brute, and the thought made me so wild that I forgot all danger; I shouted the terrible war-cry of my people, and I rushed into the midst of the shrieking Apaches, swinging my giant club as I went. I smote the Apaches to the right, and a man fell dead. I smote them to the left, and another of them bit the dust. I smote them on all sides, and as I smote they fell before me. But all the time they crowded upon me closer and closer, and it seemed that my life could not last as long as it takes a man to breathe. All about

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me was a sea of writhing, up-turned faces, and a multitude of arms reaching out to deal me the blow of death.

"In my youth I had learned the whirling dance, a dance in which one whirls upon his heel, going round so swiftly that scarcely can an onlooker see his face. When I was sorely pressed by the Apaches I thought of my skill in that dance, and I resolved to make it serve me, I whirled my club so fast that soon I had an open space about me, and then I spun upon my heel, and as I spun I swung my club. I went so fast that my club sped through the air, making a noise like the rushing of many waters. The Apaches had never seen such a sight, and as they saw their warriors fall dead before my terrible club they became afraid, and they shouted:

"'This man cannot be killed! This man bears a charmed life! He must be Chah-Now-Woof, and we cannot harm him. Let us flee, or he will kill us all!'

"I knew not where my own men were, for I had gone into the midst of the Apaches. And as the Apaches turned and fled I pursued them, and I dealt a blow of death at every step. The hot blood from gaping wounds spurted into my face, but I heeded not. The shrieks of a score of dying men rent my ears, but I heeded not. Writhing men who were dying upon the ground rose up and struck at me with their clubs, but I heeded not.

"And making the war cry of my nation sound wildly through the forest, I sped on after the fleeing Apaches, and when they were all gone from before me I was a great distance from the encampment of my people. I was bleeding from a dozen wounds, a hundred arrows had pierced my flesh, but so great had been my rage that I had not felt the stings of my wounds until I stopped to rest.

"I made my way back to the place where the camp of my people had been, and as I went my path was strewn with the dead and dying Apaches whom I had slain. One dying man raised himself upon his elbow, and tried to send an arrow through me, but I jeered at him and went on. And when I came to the place where the homes of my tribe had been, I saw a sadder sight than my eyes had ever looked upon.

"The *can-nees* of my people had been burned to the ground; the dead bodies of little children were burning in the fires of the tents, and the bravest and best warriors of my nation were strewn over the place, cold and stark in the grasp of death.

"And as I went towards the place that had been my home, I came upon the body of my young brother—a brave boy whom I had loved next to my wife, and as I saw him lying cold and still in death, I broke down and wept as weeps a babe.

"I lifted his stiff body in my arms and caressed him, and then I took a vow to kill half a hundred Apache fiends to avenge his death. Then in sorrow I went on, and when I reached my *can-nee*, I found it half burnt to the ground, and when I looked within I found it empty."

When the old man reached this place in his tale, a sigh burst from his lips, his wrinkled old face went down into his palms, and for many minutes he did not speak. But the sad spell soon left him, and he continued:

"I went within the ruined remnant of my home, and in the ground that was the floor I found little furrows that I knew had been made by the feet of my wife as she was dragged resisting from her home by the naked fiends who had stolen her. And then I turned my face to the sky, and I vowed to Chah-Now-Woof himself that I would spend my life in avenging the wrong done to my wife.

"I found that part of the Apache band had crept away from the ones I fought, and had gone round our camp and set fire to our *can-nees*, and killed some women and children; and that they were preparing to steal all our women, when my men had turned upon them, and forced them to fly for life. But before they were forced to fly they had stolen my Zeetah, and she was the only one of our women they had taken.

"I found that many of our bravest and best warriors had been killed. I found that the old man who had been chief for many years was gone. But the troubles of my people did not rest so heavily upon me as did the sorrow of losing my wife.

I turned my face to the sky.

"The women cut their hair and wailed in sorrow, and the men sang the song of death, and gathered our dead friends together to prepare them for the journey to the Happy Hunting Grounds. And while the rites of death were going on, I donned fresh paint, I filled my quiver with fresh arrows, I packed some dried meat in my pouch, and I started away in the track of the Apaches who had stolen all that the world held that was dear to me.

"At first the trail was clear, but after a day's journey I found that I must contend with the cunning of the Apaches, who are more cunning than serpents; for the trails seemed to divide and go in all directions. Then the trails seemed to disappear and to fade from the ground. But I had tracked Apaches when I was but a boy, and I followed them as surely as though the way was an open road before me.

"They had gone with the speed of the wind, and I followed them over the mountains and across the deserts for many, many weary days.

"I went by day and by night, and, at last, in the dead time of a moonless night, I came within sight of the rancheria of the Apaches. O, Chah-Now-Woof, sweet is revenge! When I saw the Apache encampment I forgot that I was weary, and was again a strong man and a chief. I crawled upon my hands and feet, gliding as silently as a serpent glides, and soon I was among the miserable tents of my foes. I went from one tent to another, listening, for I thought I would know my Zeetah even by her soft breath as she slept. At last I came to a tent larger than any of the others,

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and there I heard a sound that sent my heart into my mouth. It was the voice of Zeetah, who talked as she slept. I listened, and heard her say:

"'Lo-To-Kah, dear one, I have had an evil dream. I dreamt I was stolen from your side. Oh, Lo-To-Kah, take me closer in your arms!'

"Then my eyes were wet with tears. I scratched upon the wall of the tent to awaken her, and soon I knew she was awake, for she spoke in fright. I whispered to her, telling her I was Lo-To-Kah, and asking her to steal out to me if she were not bound. Soon she came, silently creeping to me, and I took her in my arms and kissed her as a mother might kiss a loved child who had come back to her from the grave. And then, as she was weak from so much fear and excitement, I took her in my arms and bore her away into the depths of the forest; and as I bore her I saw that she held some strange object in her hands.

"When we reached a safe place in the forest Zeetah showed me the dried body of the two-headed snake, and told me that while the battle had raged hottest a strange woman with a white skin had crept into our *can-nee* and given her the emblem, and then faded as though she had gone up in smoke.

"Zeetah knew of the snake emblem, and she had carried it with her, and because she had borne it she had not been harmed even though she was among the brute Apaches.

"Then Zeetah and I crept back to the camp of the Apaches, and we went to the tent where she had been a prisoner, which was the tent of the head chief. We crept inside, making no noise, and we found the chief still sleeping. Before he awoke a gag was in his mouth, and I threw him across my shoulder and bore him away into the forest, Zeetah following after me.

"It would have been no wrong thing to have killed him as one would kill a serpent; but when we were in the forest I unbound him. I placed his battle-club in his hands, and I told him to fight for his life, as he and I would never both go forth alive. The battle was fierce, but it was short, and when it was done, the Apaches lacked a chief.

"I knew it was Raymeya, the witch, who had come to my *can-nee*, and given the charm to my wife; but I told my wife nothing of her. And one day after that I came home from a hunt, and found my wife looking as though she was in trouble, and when I asked the cause, she said that the strange white woman had come again, and had taken away with her the dried snake. Zeetah asked me if the woman were a mortal or a spirit, and I replied that I did not know. And I do not know unto this day.

"From that time on I did not see the witch again for many long years. My wife died, I tired of this land, and as I have told you before, I learnt the speech of the white-skinned people, and journeyed among them with a show. I went to many cities and many places, and in time our show crossed the ocean and went to the land called Europe.

"Never in my life was I so lonely as I was on the day when we sailed away on the big ship, and set out into the the heart of the ocean.

"We journeyed through the land of France, and through the lands of Italy and Germany, and then we went to England. There the people went wild over us, and multitudes of them came every day to see the Indians.

"Deerfoot, the Seneca, was with us—he who was in his time the mightiest and fleetest runner in the world.

"The English people numbered among them one who was a mighty runner, and he desired to try his speed with that of Deerfoot. The race was arranged to take place in a great arena, and on the appointed day a vast concourse of people assembled. The white man was a fleet runner, going with the speed of an antelope; but he was no match for Deerfoot, who sped away like the wind. Away they went, ten times round the great race course; and Deerfoot won as easily as a coyote would win against a mongrel dog.

"The race set my blood to boiling, and I yearned to do something myself to show the white people that we children of the forests and plains were not their inferiors. I mounted the stand of the judges, and I challenged any white man there to wrestle with me for a stake of a thousand English pounds.

"The English people are famed for athletic skill, and in that audience of people were the famed boxers, and runners, and wrestlers of the nation. My offer was taken at once, and soon there stepped into the arena a man who seemed to be stronger than the strongest horse. The people shouted, and I said the match should take place at once, and I stripped off my outer garments and stepped to the side of the man. He shook my hand according to the custom of the white nations, and at once we began the battle.

"Before I was aware the man had grasped me, and he strove to throw me over his head and make short work of the match; but I am an Indian, and while he was striving with all his might I slipped through his iron hands and stood free upon the ground. Then, while he was gaping in wonder, I grasped him in such a way that he could scarcely move either hand or foot, I raised him high above my head, I bore him half round the arena, and then I pitched him away from me and he fell twenty feet from where I stood.

"The people went almost wild with excitement; they pressed about me and shook my hand till I thought they would wring it loose from my arm, for I had thrown the greatest and strongest wrestler that had ever been known in England. Then a man who was a prince came to me, and he invited Deerfoot and me to go to his palace to a banquet that he would give in our honour.

"I cared little to go to the banquet of the great man, for such things are little to my taste. But my companions urged me, and I went. There were ladies at the banquet, many of them attired in rich robes, and with their white necks gleaming like ivory.

"Deerfoot and I donned the full dress of the white men, and when the night was growing old I was called upon to make a speech. I stood up and talked to the white people, and much applause was bestowed upon me.

"But while I was speaking I glanced along the table and my speech stopped short, because I saw the two brightest eyes in the world gazing into mine. I knew the eyes were those of the witch Raymeya, and I spoke no more, although the guests wondered much. And when I knew she was there the minutes seemed like days, and as soon as I could I hastened away.

"The next day the witch came to see me. She seemed as young as she did that day so long before, when she surprised me in the forest, but she seemed sadder and more gentle. She took my hand and held it to her lips and kissed it, and then she asked me how life had gone with me since my wife had died, and asked if I were happy. I told her that life was good, but that it no longer seemed so sweet to me as in those older days when I was chief among my own people in the mountains, and that most of the joy of my life had gone out

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with the breath of my wife. And then she said, almost in a whisper:

"'And you have not changed your mind concerning the matter of which I spoke to you in the forest?'

"I told her no, and for a long time she gazed mutely upon the ground. As she gazed upon the ground I regarded her, and never have the eyes of men looked upon a fairer being. In Europe I saw fine pictures of angels, and her features were like unto the features in the pictures. I was saddened, too, to think that such a creature was doomed to go childless and loveless through life, and in sorrow for her tears came to my eyes. I turned my head away, and when I turned again the woman was gone. She had vanished, seemingly into thin air, just as she had done before.

"From that time on the witch was much in my mind, and many times in the night I woke to find that I had been dreaming of her. It seemed to me that in my sleep she came and stood by my couch and gazed on me, with her great bright eyes all filled with love; and she seemed to point to the west, as though bidding me to go again to the land of my own people.

"In time I went again to the land of my own people. I forsook the cities and the ways of the white-skinned races, I donned again the garments of my tribe, and I said to myself that with the people of my own blood I would spend the sundown of my life. I hunted with the young men of my tribe, I went to Moqui to the dance of the snakes, I journeyed among the tribes whose lands lie round about the lands of my own tribe.

"In time the life of my people palled upon me. On every hand were the forts that held the white-skinned soldiers; no more rode our young men forth to battle, and when I was surfeited with weariness I chose a strong horse and set out alone to journey to the hidden valleys that lie locked fast in the Sierra Madres, whereof the great Witch of the South was queen.

"And in time I came to lands that I had not seen since the days of my earliest manhood. Soon I was in an unknown land, and was journeying in the lands that belong to the fierce Yaquis.

"Then I came to the region where snow lies for ever on the rocks; and then I was in a region of snow and hail and storms, a desolate region never before trodden by the foot of man or beast. My horse died in that place, and I was almost minded to lie down and die. Yet hope was with me, and I struggled on and on, sometimes falling into a chasm of snow, sometimes stopping to rub my frozen feet and hands, and then going onward, and always up.

"At last, while stones of hail were almost knocking the breath from my body, I came suddenly to a wall of masonry rising out of the snow sheer before me.

"I followed it for many miles, going on long after the storm had ceased; and just as my strength was gone, and I could go no farther, I came to a place where a ladder of raw hide was hanging to the wall. I grasped the ladder, and, with my strength leaving me at every step, I painfully climbed to the top of the wall.

"Friend, the people of your kind believe in a land of Paradise, a land of joy where milk and honey flow, and every grace is known. And I say to you that your land of Paradise can be no fairer than was the land that opened to my astonished view when I had reached the summit of that cruel wall.

"And as I sat and gazed into the valley I knew it to be the land whose people called Raymeya queen, and I felt that the end of my journey was reached. That was the land of which I might have been king; those golden cities might have been mine, and my life might have been lived out in that wondrously beautiful valley, if it had not been for the love I bore for Zeetah.

"Then I climbed off the wall, into the roadway of stone, and started down into the valley. Soon I was stopped by a bronze warrior, who carried a silver spear. In a tongue that I did not know he said words to me, and when I answered him in the Spanish speech he shook his head in perplexity, and gazed on me in wonder. But he answered me in the same tongue, and he lowered his spear and walked by my side, and together we went down the winding roadway that led into the valley.

"When we came to the level land we met men and women and children, and they all stopped and gazed on me, and asked questions of my guide. I was truly in a sorry state; my clothes were worn out, my hands and feet were frozen and swollen, and my face and body were covered with scratches and bruises. And thus, hungry, naked, penniless, and ill, I was led into that golden city of which I might have been the ruler.

"I was being led to a prison that was kept for such wandering Indians as found their way into the valley; but as we were passing a palace of marble I saw the eyes of Raymeya gaze out from a window. At first she did not see me, but soon her eyes fell upon me, and then she called to the officer who was guiding me, telling him to stop. He stopped, and stood mutely by my side; and soon another officer came, and ordered that I should be taken before the queen.

"I led was through the palace grounds, into the apartment of the queen, and she rose from her place and ordered that I be left alone with her. When we were alone, the queen knelt at my side; she took my hand in hers, and her eyes were aflame with joy. She said:

"'And have you come to me at last, O, Lo-To-Kah? The time has been long, the years have passed on leaden feet; but I endured, because I believed that in time you would come.'

"I said to her: 'Raymeya, he who stands before you is an old man, whose days to live are few. I came to this place because I am tired of the land of my own people; but I came to seek no bride. I have a bride who waits for me in a land as fair as is this land of yours.'

"Raymeya rose and looked upon me in sorrow; and she was not one day older than when she came to me in the depths of the forest, or when I saw her in the greatest city of the world. The years had gone on, changing babes to men, and men back to earth; but the hand of time had not fallen on the fair face or form of the witch who was ever young.

"We seated ourselves, and drank wine; and we talked for many hours, and when we had finished, Raymeya was my friend, and she no longer craved my love. I told her all the tale of my journey through life. I told her that never could I love any woman but the one who had been my wife; and she said it was well, and that she would speak to me no more of love. Then she gazed into my face for a long time, her eyes filled with tears; and then she rose and walked up and down the room, moaning to herself. But soon she became quiet; she smiled, and laid her hand on my shoulder, and called me friend. And from that time forth she spoke no more of love.

"I was tired and hungry, and the queen ordered attendants to bathe me, and to give me food and garments; and when I was dressed, and had eaten, I lay down and slept for many hours.

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"The next day I walked with the queen through the streets of her city, and wherever we went the people bowed in reverence. Soon we were tired, and as the queen waved her hand a chariot, drawn by four horses, came to our side. We entered the chariot, and the queen ordered the driver to go to the Plaza of the Statues.

"The Plaza of the Statues was a circular place, hemmed in with palaces of marble, and in the place golden statues were scattered about, intermingled with statues carved in the purest white. In the centre was a golden statue, towering above the others. It was of beaten gold, and when I gazed upon it I almost fainted with wonder, for the statue was of myself as I was when a young man. The habiliments were those of my people, and a mighty club was in the hands.

"'That,' said the queen, pointing to the golden statue of myself, 'is the image of the king of this land, the king who never came to claim his own.'

"The eyes of the queen filled with tears, and we drove in silence away from that place. The matter of the statue troubled me, and from the time I had seen it I yearned to leave that fair city and go again to live out the remnant of my life in the rude land of my own people.

"And on the next day I said to the queen: 'O, Raymeya, tell me now the tale of your life, the tale you promised me so long ago in the forests that cover the mountains of the La Platas. Let me know the truth of the mystery of your life, and your endless youth, and your changeless beauty; and then let me go out of your land and out of your life, and let me go back to the land where I was born. I am but a wild man, and I am out of place among the splendours of your royal city. You have a warm place in my heart; you seem at once my daughter and my friend, but it is best that I abide not here with you.'

"And the queen told me the tale of her life. She said that she was born in Spain, before the time when Columbus sought the Western world. She was the daughter of a pirate, and in her early life she felt great remorse for the life that was lived by herself and her people, and she entered a convent as a nun. There she fell in love with a priest, and in order not to lay herself open to reproach, she stole away at night and fled from the convent.

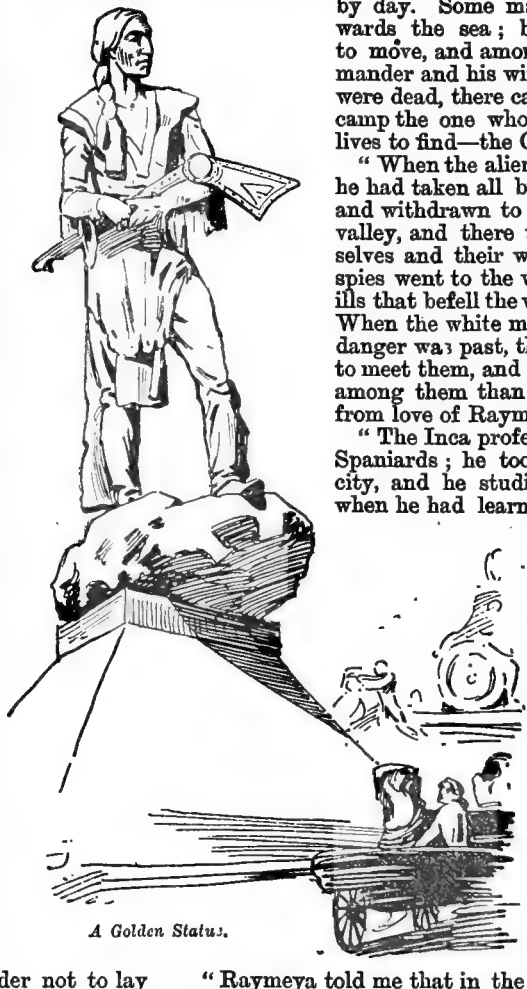
"At that time South America was the haven for all men of adventurous spirits, and at the time she fled from the convent a fleet was fitting out to sail to that land to seek for a land of gold, whose fame had reached earlier explorers. She went to the admiral of the fleet and begged that he would take her with him, and the admiral became enamoured of her beauty, and begged her to go as his wife. They were married before they sailed, and she landed on the western shores as a wife.

"In America the pioneers were wild over the tales of El Dorado, the Gilded Chief of the land of Cundinamarca, a man who was said to have so much gold that his house was built of it, and his body was powdered afresh each day with gold dust. Raymeya's husband set out to find that land, and his wife went with him. And after months of hardship they came to the plain of Cundinamarca, and they found only a village of seemingly wild Indians, who had no gold, and who fought like demons. And the Indians said there was no Gilded Chief.

"The land of Cundinamarca seemed to be full of curses for the Spaniards, and fevers and pestilence came upon them, and death abode in their camps by night and by day. Some made their way back towards the sea; but many were too ill to move, and among those were the commander and his wife. When all but a few were dead, there came to their miserable camp the one whom they had sold their lives to find—the Golden King himself.

"When the aliens had entered his land, he had taken all but a few of his people, and withdrawn to an almost inaccessible valley, and there they had hidden themselves and their wealth. But every day spies went to the valley, and told of the ills that befell the white-skinned invaders. When the white men were so few that all danger was past, the king had gone forth to meet them, and no sooner had he come among them than his heart caught fire from love of Raymeya.

"The Inca professed great love for the Spaniards; he took them to his hidden city, and he studied their speech. And when he had learned to talk with them, he sought to win Raymeya for his bride.



A Golden Statue.

"At first she refused, but he showed her his vast stores of gold and precious gems, and she sold her honour for a price. The warriors of the Inca then fell upon the Spaniards and killed all but the commander; and with her own hands Raymeya slew her husband that she might be free from him, and free to wed the Golden Chief.

"Raymeya told me that in the grey dawn of the next morning after she had killed her husband while she was lying with staring, sleepless eyes by the side of the sleeping Inca, the miracle took place that in South America is still remembered, and is called the miracle of Our Lady of the Wilderness. The apparition of an angel formed before the eyes of Raymeya, the angel's hands were pointed at her, and then these words were said:

"'O sinner, viler than the work of a fiend has been your deed this night. To gain wealth and place you have taken human life, and the souls of your victims are now in Purgatory. Until the last one of those souls is freed you shall not grow old, and the passing of time shall harm you not; but you shall be denied the blessing of death. And you shall wander over the earth, seeking

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something you shall not find, and bearing the memory of this time with you for ever!'

"Thus it is that Raymeya is ever young and ever fair, thus it is that she wanders over the earth, seeking love and finding it not; thus it is that she is the most unhappy woman who breaths the sweet air that the Great Spirits have given to the children of men.

"In time the Inca died. During the long, almost countless years that have been from then till now, Raymeya gained wisdom and the wealth that is now hers. Long ago she found the hidden valley in the Sierra Madres, occupied then by a tribe as wild as the Yaquis.

"Because they could not kill her they made her their queen, and she wrought with them and their children, and the children of their children's children, until the result is that her people are a wise and learned people, who dwell in a golden city in the fairest valley on the earth. She has taught her people all things except knowledge of the world; but she never allows them to journey beyond the mountains that shut in their valley.

"She herself wanders up and down the earth, appearing sometimes in a wild camp, disguised as an Indian woman, then going as a great lady in the courts of kings, and sometimes going as a nun to nurse the dying when the great wars are raging. But all the time she bears in her bosom a heart that is on fire, and joy is a thing that is not known to her."

Lo-To-Kah abruptly ceased speaking; he rolled a cigarette and lighted it, and then he walked up and down the room and smoked, his head low in thought. When he had finished smoking he sat down again and began talking. He said:

"Friend, when you think of all the blessings the Great Spirits have given to us of earth, remember that the greatest of all is death. It is the end of trouble, the ceasing for ever of evil doing. It will come to me soon, and may come to you also at any time, for a man's life is but as a breath of air. My mind now is often filled with thoughts of a fair land that I shall soon journey in, a land as fair as the land where Raymeya rules, but a land where no-one's heart is like a stinging adder."

The old man spread his blanket on the floor, and it was not long till I also slept, for the night was almost gone.

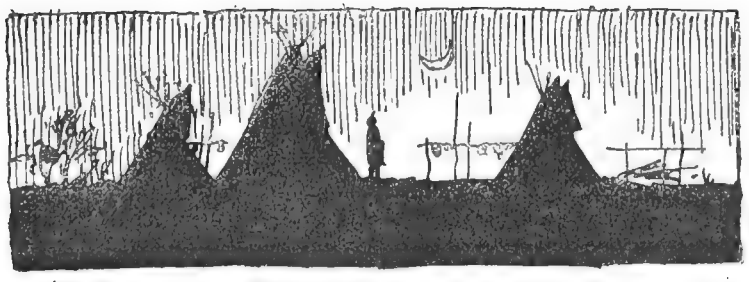
In the morning I studied the old Indian with new interest. He had travelled so far and wide, and he was so much wiser than the men of his race, and it seemed strange that he should believe such strange, weird tales as the one he had told me the night before.

I hoped he would speak further about the witch, but he did not mention her, and seemed to forget that he had spoken of her, or that such a person lived. He told me old tales of the long ago; he described the "outfits" that used to journey down the trail to Santa Fé before the railways were built, and he discussed the various army officers who had fought in the West.

The day was hot, and I slept an hour after noon. When I awoke and went outside I found the old chief on his pony, waiting to bid me farewell. He said:

"Being in this place has brought to my memory other places where the Pueblo peoples dwell, and has made me long to see the great rock of Acoma once more before I die. I am going there now. May health and joy be with you. *Adios!*"

V. Z. Reed.



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A QUEEN OF THE SAWDUST.

It was early in June when Ivan Romanyi, the lion tamer, came to me for leave to go to his uncle, who was dying, and who had sent for him. It was quite a journey north, but I think Romanyi expected some sort of a legacy, and wanted to be on hand. Our season was just beginning, and we expected a new lion from Hamburg, so that it was most inconvenient to let him go, and I gave my consent unwillingly.

The only thing that surprised me was that he should leave Rose, even for so short a time; for since the day she came to us he had been her shadow. I have seen a good many strange things in my life, but nothing stranger than this union of Rose Lynch and Ivan Romanyi. It is true Romanyi was a handsome, black-eyed fellow, with a magnificent physique, and a warm, generous heart; but he had a fearful temper, and was as jealous as a fiend. He would have fits of sullen rage that made even the roughest women amongst us fight shy of him, for when he was angry he would rave and storm, and woe betide anyone that came in his way.

Rose Lynch was marvellously pretty. She was English by birth, and had the fair skin and colouring of her country, and a mass of reddish-gold hair that looked like bits of molten fire. Her slight, pliant figure was grace itself, and her manner quiet and well-bred. Despite her rough knockabout existence, no one would ever have believed her to be a circus rider. Romanyi loved her with that insane passion that brooks no denial. How he won her we never knew, but she accepted his fierce caresses quietly, and even in his worst moods she had no fear of him, for he was never rough to her. At the mere sound of her voice his frowns and scowls would disappear, and instead of the surly, brutal lion-tamer, he would be a passionate-eyed Hungarian lover.

He left Rose unwillingly enough. I think the night he bade us good-bye it must have almost broken his heart; his face was grey, and his eyes blazed like small fires under his black brows. Rose was as quiet and indifferent as usual, and did not seem to be sorry or rejoice at his going. He had quite a journey before him, and during his absence Fritz, the under tamer, took charge of the lions.

Rose was our *première* rider, and she was a universal favourite, and was always received with wild applause wherever we went.

I have never seen a woman ride as she did, or dare the feats that seemed mere child's play to her. As I said, she was a very beautiful woman at any time, but when she came into the ring in her soft gauze skirts, her exquisite arms and neck bare, her glorious hair over her shoulders, she was a vision no man that has ever seen her will forget. I had been very busy, and had not been back in the tent for a week, when one night, Martin, the ringmaster, beckoned to me before the performance. "What's up with Rose?" he said cautiously. I looked at him inquiringly.

"Haven't you seen her new outfit?" he asked. I shook my head, and just then the bell sounded and he left me. I walked back to the dressing tent, and crossed over to Rosie's corner and called her. She pushed the curtains aside and came out to me, and I saw what Martin meant. She had discarded her gauze skirts, and was dressed simply, but superbly, in a blue cloth habit, with a jacket that fitted her body closely, and the orthodox English tile on her blonde head. Her small hands and feet were perfectly gloved and booted, and she swung a riding crop in her hand. She had never looked more beautiful; her sweet face and slim throat rose like a flower out of its dark setting.

"What a stunning get-up, Rosie," I said.

She smiled uneasily, and then she said softly:

"Dick"—we were great friends, Rosie and I—"Dick, don't I look better so? More, more"—she hesitated—"like other women?"

She looked at me anxiously.

"You couldn't look like other women, my girl," I said lightly, and then, before she had time to answer, a young fellow walked towards her who had come through the side entrance, and, despite my orders to admit no one, here he was in the dressing-tent. He looked a boy about twenty, from his dress and manners evidently one of the upper ten, and as clean and as handsome a chap as you would wish to see. His hair was as fair as Rosie's own, and he was straight-limbed and broad-shouldered and tall, a splendid specimen of our young Englishmen. As he took off his hat to Rose her face flushed scarlet from brow to chin. It startled me so that I stared at her like a fool. She introduced me to him after a moment.

"Dick, this is Mr. Langdon, a friend of mine. Our manager, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Langdon."

And that was the first inkling I had of it. And then she came close to me, and said: "Be nice to him, Dick, for my sake, and, remember, he knows nothing."

I presume I gaped like an idiot. I couldn't believe it was Rose—Rose whom we called cold and indifferent—Rose whom no man ever seemed to have any effect upon—and here was this slip of a boy. When she came into the ring Langdon and I stood and watched her. For a moment the crowd did not know her in her new dress, and then they thundered applause at her. She never rode more madly, more superbly. Langdon's eyes shone; his face was flushed with pleasure.

"Isn't she wonderful?" he demanded of me. He was oblivious to anything or anybody, and after that one question waited breathlessly until she came back to us. She stood with him a little apart from me, waiting for her second entrance, and I heard him say to her: "Darling, how good of you to get this dress to please me. Now I know you love me."

To say that I felt stunned will not express it—I was ready to believe myself drunk or insane. It seemed incredible. But there stood Rose, looking eagerly into that boy's face, her lips and cheeks radiant as I had never seen them before, her voice indistinctly soft. I thought of Romanyi, and shuddered at the thought.

The new lion arrived, as ill-luck would have it, just at this time, and a viciously ugly brute he was, too. Fritz seemed quite unable to manage him, and I wished Ivan back a hundred times.

Langdon came each day, and Rose was uneasy and restless until she saw him. It was a boy's first love, and he gloried in the fact that we all knew it. Martin told me it was causing no end of talk, and small wonder, to anyone who knew Rose and Romanyi.

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But one night as I was sitting alone at my desk, Rose swung the curtain aside and came in. She still had on her riding habit, and her long hair was uncovered, and she looked as white as marble.

Before I realised what she was doing, she threw herself down beside my chair, and, leaning her head against my knee, sobbed wildly. "Why, Rose," I said soothingly, "what is it, my girl?"

"Dick," she said, "this is killing me. What shall I do? You tell me, Dick. You have always been good to me, and I can trust you. You know (shuddering) Ivan will soon return. What shall I do then, Dick? What am I to say to him, I, whom he loves more than anything in the world? I thought I could break it off any time, and yet now I seem bound hand and foot.

"And Horace Langdon has shown me how I can love! He thinks I am the best and purest of women. He wouldn't believe an angel from heaven against me, Dick, and I love him better than my life! Horace loves me, and asks me to be his wife. Me! Rose Lynch—Ivan's sweetheart! Aren't you sorry for me, Dick? What shall I do?" She swayed to and fro.

"Are you afraid of Ivan?" I asked. She shook her head.

"Ivan wouldn't hurt me," she said; "he would tell me to go and be happy. If it killed him he'd tell me. It isn't of Ivan I'm thinking, it's of Horace, I can't wreck his life, and he won't take no for an answer; he thinks I am so good and true to him. Help me, Dick!"

Poor Rose. It made my heart ache to look at her. I took her back to her tent, and quieted her sobs as best I could, and the next day she was dry-eyed, but white as the dead. Langdon came as usual, during the afternoon performance, and had a long talk with her. When he left, Rose looked as if she would faint. Her eyes had great dark circles round. When I told her I had had a telegram from Romanyi, and that he would reach us for the evening, a red spot burnt in each cheek, but she did not answer me.

When night came and the big tent was crowded, I walked back to see how Rose was. Langdon was waiting for her also. When she came towards us I saw that for the first time since he had asked her not to wear them she had put on her short gauze skirts and tights again. His eyes contracted suddenly.

"What does this mean, Rose?" he asked.

She went over to him. We were quite alone in the small entry between the ring and the dressing-tent, and screened by the draught curtains. They had forgotten that I was there. As Rose reached him he put out his arms and closed them round her suddenly.

"Are you doing it to try me, dear?" he said. "Have you forgotten your promise?"

She shook her head.

"Tell me you will let me take you away from it all, Rose," he said. "I will make life so happy for you; you are not meant to stay here, dear; you are meant for me—to make me happy, and to live with me always." She lay in his arms, silently, the world forgotten. Langdon's lips met hers. "My wife," he whispered. But at that word Rose pushed him away from her.

"Not that, not that," she said unsteadily. "I had forgotten. Do you know Ivan Romanyi, the lion tamer, returns to-night?"

Langdon stared at her blankly.

"Well, what of that?" he asked.

She raised her head and looked him full in the face. I stepped forward to prevent her, but she motioned me back impatiently.

"He is my lover," she said; "he has been for three years."

Langdon gave a faint cry, but then he smiled at her. "You are playing with me, dear," he said; "it cannot be true!"

She turned to me.

"It is true; ask Dick. Dick, tell him; tell him."

Langdon's eyes, heavy with dread, turned towards me. I could not speak to the poor lad. I looked at Rose, but she pointed at me unflinchingly. Then I bowed my head silently for assent. Langdon will not be whiter when he is dead. But he made no sound; he turned and left us. Then I heard Ivan's voice.

Rose gasped for breath wildly.

"Don't let him come near me," she said, and fainted in my arms.

Romanyi came in, his face eager, full of happiness, calling: "Rose, Rose." When he saw her he dropped on his knees and gathered her into his arms silently. When Rose opened her eyes she saw him. His face lighted up with joy and relief. "Rose, my girl," he said passionately, "I will not go again," and, stooping, he kissed her hotly. At the touch of his lips she shuddered and sprang to her feet.

"Do not touch me," she said faintly. He looked at her bewilderedly. Then his face grew dark.

"You do not love me now?" he asked.

He leant against one of the tent supports breathing heavily.

"No, I do not love you any longer," she said slowly.

The colour faded from Romanyi's face, and left it set and grey, like flint. His dark eyes seemed covered with a film, his straight red lips grew blue and pinched. Just then the new lion set up a terrible roaring. It seemed to rouse Ivan.

"It is the new one," he said, his quick ear distinguishing a strange voice among his pets.

"Yes, and an ugly beast he is, too," I said.

Rose turned and left us without another word. Walking into the ring Romanyi threw back his head fiercely. "I will go and look at that lion," he said.

I followed him. The beast paced to and fro furious at his imprisonment. The other lions, seeing Ivan, whinnied and howled after him. He turned to me quietly.

"The little Rose has found another to care for," he said, in a curious low tone.

"She has been quite true to you," I replied. His white lips parted over his gleaming teeth, and into his eyes crept that look before which even the lions tremble.

"And for me," he said softly, "for me there is left—what? What is life but Rose? What is love but Rose? Do you think I will let her go from me?"

And then he burst into a storm of silent sobs, which shook his body violently. The lions growled ominously. They were unused to weakness from Romanyi. The new lion roared sullenly. Romanyi took a piece of meat and started towards its cage. I thought he was going to feed it, and stood watching him. He opened the cage door, and stood, his long prod in his hand. The beast crouched, lashing the floor of his cage with his tail.

Romanyi stood erect. As the lion made its leap towards him he turned, and then, to my horror, threw the long prod away from him, and stood waiting. It was all over in a second, and the trainers, who ran in at my cries, covered up his body decently, and threw fresh sand in the cage.

And out in the arena Rose in her pink skirts was riding for the people.

F. Chase.

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CONSULTING A FORTUNE-TELLER

BUSINESS in the printing trade in the otherwise thriving town of Mayneborough was anything but satisfactory. "There are too many of us, I'm thinking," was the comment of Amos Parsons, as, having opened his morning letters, he did not find a single order amongst them, and was wondering how on earth he was going to keep his machines running if things didn't improve.

Just at this moment a smart, well-dressed man entered, and handing over some papers, asked how soon he could have twenty-five thousand circulars announcing a sale of a bankrupt draper's stock.

"When do you want them?" was the reply.

"As quickly as ever you can do them. I want to get them out by to-night's post if possible."

"All right; you shall have them. How's business generally? Things are bad enough in our line, I know."

"Well, I can't grumble; you see, Sellers and Co. are always on the look out for anything likely to attract the public. Now, between you and me, this bankrupt stock I'm advertising is in reality nothing of the kind, but only some odds and ends I happen to have over from last spring; only it tickles the public taste to announce a sale—Alarming Sacrifice! Bankrupt Stock! or Great Fire! Salvage to be sold at an immense reduction—Anything to draw 'em in the place, that's my motto. And now, then, about price for these circulars? I was offered them at eight shillings a thousand. Can you do it a bit finer than that?"

"Eight shillings a thousand! Gad, things must be bad; why, that's almost down to cost."

"Well, here it is, you can see for yourself," handing him an estimate.

"All right; I will do the twenty-five thousand at £9 10s.; anything to keep the machines going; the price can't matter so very much, for if things go on as they're going, I shall have to clear out, that's all about it."

"I say, old man, I'm sorry they're so bad as all that; it seemed to me, judging from the number of people I see come in here of a day, you were doing a roaring trade."

"Agents, sir, agents, every one of them; first it's one thing, then it's another; but these insurance fellows are the worst; I had no less than three of them in here yesterday—two fire, and one life."

"You are insured, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; I had the sense to do that when I came in first, and a pretty penny they charged me for premium."

"And yet yours isn't such a risky business as mine. By Jove! how my stuff would blaze," he added meditatively.

"I don't know about that; you see, there is a lot of oil and cotton waste about; it's wonderful what a lot of the stuff the engines take; it seems as if they must eat it sometimes."

"What do you value your stock at?"

"Oh, I don't know; I insured for two thousand pounds, but I can't see it now," ruefully.

"Don't be down in the dumps over it, things will take a turn before long; why don't you give yourself a holiday for a day or two? Tell you what; when I get this sale well under weigh, I'm going to run up to London for a couple of days; what do you say, will you come?"

"Well, in the present state of business I can't press forward the excuse that I'm too busy! I'll let you know this afternoon, when I deliver these things."

"All right. You come; a bit of a change will do you good."

After considering the matter, Amos Parsons decided to go, being careful to instruct his foreman before going to wire him at once should anything turn up.

Once in London, Mr. Parsons to a certain extent forgot his business troubles, and determined to have a good time of it, as he said.

On the evening of their arrival, his companion made the somewhat sparkling remark that he was going to have his fortune told.

"I thought you had more sense," was the reply.

"Well, I don't know so much about that. The oracle I consult, and I generally give her a look in once or twice a year, has a wonderful knack, or gift, or whatever you like to call it, of foreseeing things—in business, I mean—and only last year she was the means of putting a very comfortable sum to my credit, by advising me to make a big purchase in a particular line, which I did; and it came off trumps, too."

"Well, I hope she will be equally successful this time, that's all."

"Ah! you may laugh, but I know."

An hour or two after Mr. Sellers returned, his face wearing a more than usually satisfied expression.

"Well, what says the oracle this time?"

"Never you mind. I believe she's struck oil; anyway, I'm going to wire my manager to do as she suggests. Why don't you have a try yourself? I mentioned your name to her, and said things had been going bad with you."

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"And what did she say?—that there was a bright future in store for me?"

"No," meditatively, "she did not; but she said she was sorry to hear any friend of mine was in low water, and that if you would give her a call she would advise you as to whether it was worth while holding on or not."

"How on earth can she tell? Why, it is simply absurd."

"Absurd or not, when I consulted her first, four years ago, she said: 'Do you know Mayneborough?'

"I said I did."

"Well, what of that?"

"Just this; she said: 'That place is on the move upwards. You go there and set up; don't be afraid of advertising; spend your last shilling if necessary, or your last but one.' She is a cautious woman. But you take my advice and go."

"And what did she know of Mayneborough?"

"Goodness knows; I don't. But I went, and I have never had occasion to regret it, and she has done me two or three good turns since. You take my advice; I'm not joking. You call on her to-morrow; it can't do any harm, and it may be the means of turning your luck."

"Oh, I don't believe in that sort of thing. My luck is dead out, I know; but going to see a fortune-teller won't alter it, that I can see."

"Very well, have your own way, then; but don't say I didn't tell you. And now let's go to the theatre."

Nothing more was said between them, but somehow the idea of having his fortune told grew upon Mr. Parsons. He couldn't divest himself of it entirely, do what he would, and in the morning he said: "Do you know, I am half inclined to give it a trial."

"Give what a trial?"

"Why, this sorceress of yours. By the way, what's her fee—that's a consideration these times, as you know."

"Ha, ha! so you've come round, have you? Well, Madame L'Anson has a strange way of doing business. If you go to her as a stranger she charges you so much for a consultation; but if you are introduced by one of her regular clients, like myself, she is content to abide by results. No result, no pay. Fair enough, isn't it?"

"Most satisfactory to the consulting party, I should say."

"Well, here you are," writing down a name and address on a small piece of paper; "there are your credentials; I wish you luck."

As Amos Parsons entered a 'bus going in the direction stated, he had an inward feeling he was making an ass of himself. "After all, it is only a joke," he kept on repeating, "and there's nothing to pay, that's a comfort."

The 'bus put him down within ten minutes' walk of his destination, which, having been accurately described to him by his friend, he had not much difficulty in discovering. No. 133—"There's luck in odd numbers," he said to himself, with a nervous laugh—was an eminently respectable, although small villa, not at all the sort of place he had expected to find a fortune-teller at, his experience in such matters being restricted to certain "revelations" he had read in the papers from time to time. In answer to his modest knock, a trim servant appeared at the door.

"Is Madame L'Anson at home?"

She was; did the gentlemen desire to see her?

Mr. Parsons replied that he did.

The neat little sitting-room into which he was ushered had nothing remarkable about it, except that the light was to a certain extent excluded by thick curtains drawn across the window; in other respects it was of the ordinary type, such as might have been expected from the exterior of the house.

Presently the door opened, and a well-dressed woman of about thirty-five years of age made her appearance.

That she was an eminently handsome woman most people would have admitted; and the majority would probably have been unanimous in agreeing that there was a something out of the common about her. Her big black eyes seemed to search one through and through, and as she looked at Mr. Parsons he felt decidedly uncomfortable.

She lost no time in coming to the point.

"You desire to consult me, I presume."

"I—er—do, madame; my friend, Mr. Sellers, tells me he mentioned my name to you."

"He did; and what is it you desire. Love or business?"

"Did not Mr. Sellers mention that I am already married?"

"Oh; then"—as if relieved—"it's business, I suppose—business is always more satisfactory to deal with; allow me to look at your hand.

"H'm; you have had a varied experience I can see."

Mr. Parsons smiled; this was a safe remark to make, he thought.

"Things have not been going well altogether with you of late, I understood from our friend, Mr. Sellers."

"That is so, madame; and what I want to know is, if there is any chance of their improving?"

"Quite so. Cut these cards, please," handing him a well-used pack.

He obeyed her request, mechanically.

"Thank you," proceeding to deal them out, and arranging them in the form of a circle.

Mr. Parsons looked on and said nothing.

After regarding them intently for a while, the lady spoke as follows:

"I can see you won't remain long where you are."

"I can't, if things don't improve," was Mr. Parsons' remark to himself; at least he was not aware he gave vent to his thoughts, but she evidently divined them.

"That is to say, you won't be able to, if things don't mend; is that not so?" with a smile.

"The very thought I had in my mind," he answered nervously.

"Quite so; so you see I was right, but"—looking again at the cards—"I think business will improve, and that very shortly, too; now, what would you say if you were to unexpectedly—quite unexpectedly—receive payment of a sum of, say, two thousand pounds?"

"Why, that's exactly——"

"Yes, exactly enough to put you on your feet, you were going to say—give you a fresh start somewhere else perhaps; but possibly you could do this with one hundred less—say one thousand nine hundred pounds, now."

"I should be very pleased to see the one hundred just now."

The lady took no heed of the remark, but continued as if she had not heard it.

"Well, now, I am prepared to make you a bet that within, say, ten days from now, you are a richer man than you are at present by the sum I have named. Is it a bet?"

"But suppose I am not, you will have to pay me."

"Exactly, that's my lookout; but I can see from the extraordinary combination formed by the cards that,

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surprising as it may seem to you, it will nevertheless be as I say. Men may lie, women deceive, but cards tell the truth," and sweeping the outspread cards together she looked at him intently and again asked, "is it a bet, now?"

"But this is so very unusual, so, er—unbusinesslike," inwardly wishing he had never come into the place.

"My profession is not conducted on the same lines as an ordinary business. I have told you what I foresee; it is for you to say whether you accept my wager."

"But I can't lose."

"Pardon me, but you can——and really my time is too valuable to waste," rising as if to go from the room.

"Well, as you are so good"—with a laugh—"it would be idiotic of me to refuse; let it be a bet between us, then."

"Thanks, then I'll just put it in writing, if you don't mind," and taking out a neat little pocket-book she made an entry therein. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind signing it; your initials will do quite well. Thanks; and now if the luck I have foretold does not come off, on the tenth day from now I will remit you one hundred pounds; if it does, I shall expect you as an honourable man to do the same. *Au revoir.*" And before the now bewildered Amos knew quite what had happened he found himself alone.

Once in the open air the mysterious compact ceased to trouble him so much, and he actually went so far as to laugh at what had just taken place.

Sellers was awaiting his return. "Well, what did she tell you?"

Mr. Parsons gave a graphic description of what had taken place, expecting his friend to well laugh at him for having been so easily bamboozled.

To his surprise he did nothing of the sort; but in a sententious tone, remarked: "My experience of Madame L'Anson is that she is a very clever woman; that's all I have to say."

"But my dear fellow——"

"I mean what I say, that's all; but if you are inclined to look upon the whole thing as a joke, well, so be it."

The next day the two friends returned to Mayneborough, the topic not having again been referred to.

The following morning Mr. Parsons was at his office in good time. "Any letters, Wilkins?"

"Yes, sir;" handing them to him. To his agreeable surprise three of them contained orders (from strangers), in each of which the necessary payment was inclosed.

During the next day or two business decidedly improved, the customers in every case being new ones, so that he had no hesitation in asking for prepayment.

Towards evening Mr. Sellers, as neat and spruce-looking as usual, called in casually.

"Business any better, Parsons?"

"Things are certainly looking up. That's a good sign, isn't it?" pointing to a freshly delivered bale of cotton waste standing just inside the door-way.

"I told you things would improve before long. Hallo! here's a customer," as a smart, dapper-looking little man, carrying a small black hand-bag, approached.

"I was informed at my hotel, sir, I might rely on getting a small printing order executed expeditiously at this establishment. I have run short of these price cards," handing over a square-shaped business card with a long list of prices of goods, but no name of the vendor. "I should be very much obliged if you could let me have 500 by twelve o'clock to-morrow, when I will call; and may I leave my bag here till then?" suiting the action to the word, and putting it down just by the cotton-waste.

"I'm afraid that waste is greasy, sir."

"Oh, it won't hurt, thanks; it's only an old bag; and now I'll pay you, please, if you will give me a bill. . . . Thanks. I may rely on these cards to-morrow, midday?"

"They shall be ready, sir."

"Smart little chap that, Parsons."

"Yes; who did he say he travelled for?"

"I didn't catch the name; isn't it on the cards?"

"No; they are only list prices."

"You charged him a pretty stiff price, didn't you?"

"Well, you see, it is short notice; in fact, my men are all gone for the night, and I was just going to lock up when you came."

"Always do that yourself?"

"Always. I never go away till I have been round the place and seen that everything is all right. One can't be too careful, I think."

"Quite right, too. Going straight home to-night?"

"Yes. I shall just catch the 6.30 train. If you've got nothing to do you might come and dine with me. I'm better company than I was now business is looking up."

* * * * *

A headline in the next morning's paper announced "Great fire in a printing establishment," and the account went on to say that the premises lately occupied by Mr. Parsons had been totally destroyed by fire.

* * * * *

Of course, there was the usual inquiry, at which it was elicited, amongst other things, that the proprietor had been the last to leave the building on the preceding evening, and his friend Mr. Sellers came forward to prove that he had accompanied him on his final tour of inspection when everything appeared to be all right.

* * * * *

The origin of the fire remained a mystery; but there being no reason to suspect incendiarism the insurance company paid up in full, after deducting the claims of several customers who had orders in course of execution, for which, as they proved by producing the receipts, they had paid for in advance.

No claim was, however, entered by the smart little man with the black bag, which was, of course, consumed by the fire, and he did not even come forward as a witness at the inquiry.

Mr. Parsons sent a one hundred-pound bill to Mrs. L'Anson, and that lady in return, by way of acknowledgment, sent him a leaf from a small pocket-book, setting forth the terms of a certain wager, to which oddly enough the initials A. P. were appended. Although the ground landlord offered to re-erect fresh premises for him, he decided that he had had enough of the place, and set up in the printing line in another town, some distance away. He has not had his fortune told since.

S. J. F. Newbery.

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The Secret of the Mine.

Every day, at the peaceful hour of the siesta, Techina, the daughter of Señor Don Andres, used to ascend the hill and sit in the shadow of the old rock, whose jagged summit was mirrored in the blue waters of the Sangre de Dios. Juan was always awaiting her, and both used to lose themselves in dreams of future happiness. For the two loved each other, but, alas! with a hopeless love. Juan was poor; he had nothing in the world but his health and strength, and what was that to Señor Don Andres, the richest rancher in the country?

Juan and Techina, entirely absorbed in their love, never dreamt that Don Andres could refuse to unite his daughter's wealth to Juan's poverty. But one day the old ranchero informed Techina that he had promised her to Don Pablo, whose fortune was nearly equal to his own. The girl begged and prayed; but prayers and supplications were useless.

Juan remained silent while Techina was telling him her trouble, but when the girl rose to return to the rancho Juan stopped her. "Techina," said he passionately, "swear that you will love me—that you will wait for me—and I, too, will be rich!"

"I do love you, Juan," she answered. "I will never marry anyone but you; I swear it now, by the God who hears and sees us!"

One night Juan appeared before her near the rancho, his big, black eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"Come, Techina," he said, embracing her; "cheer up, and dry your tears. To-morrow we shall be happy, for to-morrow I shall be rich. I shall have so much gold that the most powerful will bow to the earth and call me 'Señor.' I will lay a queen's dowry at your feet, Techina mine, and for our wedding you shall have a dress richer and more beautiful than the Madonna's! For I have discovered the secret of the mine—that old mine where great lumps of gold have been sleeping for centuries."

"Stop, Juan, stop!" cried the girl in terror. "Do you not know that the secret of the mine is fatal?"

"Ah, the Indians say so, Techina," he answered, "but I don't believe it. The secret may kill those who wish to carry off the gold from mere love of riches, but it cannot harm him who seeks it for love of you, Techina mine."

This was the legend at Los Angeles. Long ago, the Indians said, strangers came to the country. They dug up the soil and discovered gold. They compelled the natives to extract the precious metal for them; but, as if the earth desired to preserve inviolate the riches hidden in her bosom, all who worked in the mine were struck down by a mysterious death. Then the Indians took to flight. The strangers also abandoned the district. When they had gone the natives returned, blocked up the mouth of the mine with rocks, and spread the rumour that to touch the gold was death.

Juan knew the legend, and had long shared the popular belief. But he would have dared anything for Techina's sake. He had, therefore, sought and found the entrance of the mine. Once master of the secret, he had boldly attacked the rocks, which were now bound together by the roots of great trees, whose seeds had been carried to the spot by the wind centuries before. Juan told all this to Techina, and when they parted that night she had forgotten her sadness and despair. Next morning Juan resumed his labour, which was so difficult that he often doubted whether he should ever accomplish it. But the thought of Techina nerved him, and when darkness fell he always turned homewards murmuring "To-morrow."

About this time a number of men arrived from the north. They brought strange instruments, surveyed the valley, and calculated the heights of the mountains. They also drove in stakes surmounted by little red flags. They were engineers engaged in making the Southern Pacific Railway.

Among them was one man who took no part in his companions' work. All day he used to wander about the mountain, striking the rocks with a little steel hammer, and carefully picking up the pieces which he broke off. His name was Atkins, and the inhabitants looked upon him as a madman. Several times he met Juan with his pick on his shoulder. He then followed him at a distance, and watched him at night. He came, too, in Juan's absence to satisfy himself of the progress of the work. Then Atkins' face, usually so calm and cold, was lighted up with a strange expression. He also was in search of the mine whose terrible legend he well knew.

One evening, in the little chapel, Techina was kneeling before the Madonna. She asked a blessing on Juan and on their love; and, clad in her beautiful pale blue robe, embroidered with gold and adorned with false jewels that glistened in the taper's light, the Virgin seemed to smile down upon her. Her name, pronounced quite close to her, startled her.

"Techina," a well-known voice repeated.

It was Juan who called her. She rose and followed him.

"Techina, dear Techina," he said, leading her into the shadow of the trees, "to-morrow will see my triumph and happiness. To-morrow I shall have penetrated into the mine. I have cut my way through the stones piled up by the Indians. But I wish you, Techina, to be the first to see the treasures that I have won for you; so to-morrow we will descend together. Then we will take your father with us, and let him judge whether my wealth is great enough."

"Ah! Juan," she cried, "how I love you. And how happy I am! But—I am afraid."

"But I fear nothing, Techina. The legend lied! I found the secret of the mine, and when the last stone rolled away, disclosing the entrance to the dark gallery, I did not even tremble. No, no, Techina mine, I fear nothing. You love me, and—I am rich."

Next day, when all was still in the rancho, Techina climbed the hill, and approached the base of the old rock. Juan was waiting for her, leaning on his pick beside the black hole that had been opened at the cost of so much labour. He was happier than a prince and prouder than a conqueror. Techina approached trembling, but dared not look within. She was possessed by a strange fear.

"The legend lied, Techina!" exclaimed Juan; "the secret of the mine kills no one!"

He had scarcely spoken when a sharp report sounded, a cloud of white smoke burst from a neighbouring bush, and Juan fell on his face, dead, at Techina's feet.

Another report, another cloud of smoke from the bush, and Techina had fallen on her lover's body.

Thus were they united for ever.

A man now appeared. It was Atkins.

He looked at his victims a moment; then, slipping two cartridges into his revolver, he withdrew, muttering:

"The secret of the mine kills those who discover it. Now I can work it without fear."

Fernand Hue.

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The Queen of Night.

By HEADON HILL,

Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Gaston Vizard gives to Sir Simon Crawshay an introduction to the agent of the vessel *Queen of Night*, in order that he may make special arrangements with regard to the trip of his wealthy ward, Miss Challenor. Dr. Zavertal calls on Vizard, and informs him that a new captain will be wanted before the next cruise.

The *Queen of Night*, under the guise of a popular pleasure boat, is used in reality by a set of unscrupulous adventurers for the purpose of doing away with objectionable relatives.

In Chapter I. Cyril Forrester receives his dismissal from the Flower Steamship Company for breaking regulations while saving the life of Miss Aline Challenor. He applies for and obtains from Nathan and Co., of Fenchurch Street, the vacant command of the ocean yacht *Queen of Night*.

Becoming engaged to Miss Challenor (who comes in for a quarter of a million on attaining her majority), he obtains an interview with Sir Simon Crawshay, who promptly refuses a consent to his engagement, and informs him that his ward will be out of his way for the next six weeks, as she is about to take a cruise on board the *Queen of Night!*

CHAPTER IV.

The Face at the Gangway.

As I stood in the Victoria Docks looking for the first time at the noble vessel I was to command I will dare wager that there was not a happier man or a prouder man than the *Queen of Night's* new captain within a thousand miles—no, not even among those homeward-bound passengers debouching from the great "liner" in the next berth.

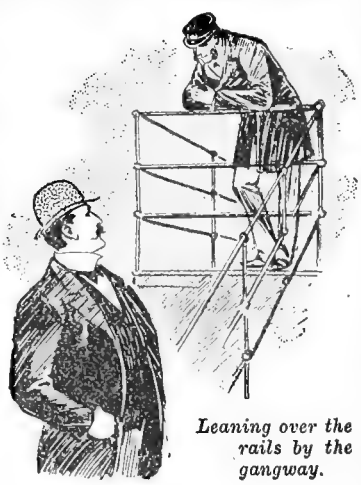
Her hull was painted a pale yellow, or cream-colour, her two funnels the same, and her brass-work glittered like burnished gold. She was bigger than any other steamer in the Docks, and from her yacht-like smartness would have been taken rather for a Navy ship than for a liner, were it not that the bright flowers and tropical plants displayed on her decks suggested war as little as commerce.

I repeat that I was a proud and happy man that morning. The ship was the cause of my pride, and need I say that my happiness sprang from the knowledge that she was to be Aline's home as well as mine for the next six weeks. Sir Simon Crawshay's announcement—made in all ignorance of my appointment to the *Queen of Night*—that my dear girl was to be one of her passengers on the coming trip had seemed almost too good to be true. But that it *was* true I gathered from his succeeding sentences, and I said nothing to disturb his ignorance.

Not knowing what was the real—the terribly real—meaning of this pleasure-cruise, I could have shouted with laughter, and had hard work to compose my face as the baronet went on to discuss the merits of the vessel I was to command. All that my silly nautical brain could grasp was, firstly, that I was besting Sir Simon, and, secondly, that Nathan's visit to Grosvenor Square was explained by business connected with the trip. I did not pause to wonder why the passage had not been booked in the ordinary way at the West-end office.

I concealed my triumph as best I could under an air of bitter chagrin, and as soon as possible took my leave, the one great hope in my heart being that Sir Simon would not discover my appointment to the *Queen of Night* before the steamer sailed. I did not know whether he was to accompany his ward, but that mattered little. If the ship could only get away without his knowing who the captain was, Aline and I would have at any rate six clear days on board together before anyone could land at Gibraltar—the first port of call. From what Nathan had let drop I gathered that the owners were not anxious to advertise the change of captains among the clients, so I thought there was every chance of gaining my object.

The testimonial of the Flower Line proved satisfactory to Nathan, and now here I was, on the day after the events recorded in the previous chapter, taking my first view of the "floating palace," as the advertisements called it, that had been committed to my charge. I had hurried down to the docks the moment the letter had been approved and the appointment ratified. The little Jew had given me a note of introduction to the surgeon of the ship—Dr. Zavertal—whom he said I should find living on board, and he further admonished me to get on as well as I could with the Doctor, as the medico of a vessel frequented largely by invalids in quest of health was necessarily an important personage.



Leaning over the rails by the gangway.

"You will find him a nice-spoken, easy shentleman to sail with, but you had better let him have his way in anything outside the navigation of the ship," Nathan had said on handing the letter, and then he had emphasised the words by adding, significantly: "Them's *instructions*, remember."

As there still remained nearly a week before the date of departure no signs of bustle or activity were as yet apparent on the steamer, which lay alongside the wharf with her gang-plank out and only one or two men visible on deck engaged in polishing and painting. Nathan had told me that the main portion of the crew would not be shipped till two days before sailing, and that I should only find on board the officers and a few permanent hands who were retained to keep things ship-shape. Even the business of taking in the stores had not yet commenced.

Having satisfied myself with a general view of the vessel, I picked my way towards her across the lumber-strewn quay, and I was about to step on to the gang-plank when for the third time the uneasy feeling that had moved me in the office of Nathan and Co. took hold of me. Instinctively raising my eyes I saw that a man was leaning over the rails by the gangway, watching my progress with quiet interest. He wore a gold-braided cap with a peak, and from this and his dark-blue brass-buttoned frock coat I judged him to be one of the officers. That, however, was not the cause of the thrill that ran through me. Rather was it that the face was the face of the man who had turned and looked at me outside the Flower offices in Leadenhall Street, and that the eyes were the eyes which had then so vividly recalled the mysterious slits in Nathan's chart of the Black Sea.

But the strange part of this last meeting—whether it was really the second or the third I could not say—was

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that, as his eyes met mine and I returned look for look, the uneasy feeling left me at once and I wondered at myself for ever having entertained it. He began beaming at me with a genial smile of good-fellowship that promised the most friendly relations, and almost immediately sang out:

"Step aboard, sir. Welcome to the *Queen of Night*."

Quickly crossing the plank, I found him waiting at the other end to receive me, when he added:

"A passenger to view the ship?"

I was dressed in plain clothes, so that the question was a perfectly natural one, provided that I had been mistaken about the eyes in the map, and that his presence outside the Flower offices had been accidental. There was certainly nothing in his demeanour to show that he had ever seen me before, or that he was not thoroughly aboveboard.

"No," I said. "My name is Forrester—Captain Forrester. I have been appointed to command the ship. I have a letter here for Dr. Zavertal."

"My dear Captain, I am delighted to be the first to receive you," he said, shaking me warmly by the hand. "I am Dr. Zavertal. Come into my den and refresh yourself, or perhaps you would prefer to make your tour of inspection first."

I told him that I should be very glad to begin with a chat, and he led the way to his deck-cabin amidships, glancing at Nathan's open letter of introduction on the way. The combination of surgery and study into which he showed me was, like every other portion of the steamer, luxuriously furnished and softly upholstered. The walls were matchboarded with some costly polished wood, and the floor was thickly carpeted. On the two seaward sides were plate-glass windows instead of the usual circular lights. At the fore end were fixed the shelves for drugs and medical appliances, while right across the after part of the cabin hung a gorgeous curtain shutting off the Doctor's sleeping apartment. A canary and a couple of gaudy parroquets twittered in gilded cages, and there were bright flowers everywhere.

"Snug quarters, Doctor," I said, coming to an anchor on a chair, while he busied himself with glasses and decanters.

"Yes, it's not a bad crib for a struggling medico, is it?" he assented jovially. "You see my department is the health, happiness, and comfort of the passengers. I couldn't keep them healthy, happy, and comfortable if I wasn't all that myself—so I do myself well."

Busied himself with glasses and decanters.

"I can understand that you have your hands full," I replied. "The doctor on a regular liner hasn't too soft a time of it—on a ship full of health-seekers you must almost need an assistant."

"It ain't always the sickest as snuffs it the quickest!"

A wink seemed now quite natural to those smiling eyes which had struck me with such a queer chill at first, and Doctor Zavertal winked as he said: "Oh, don't run away with that idea, Captain. They're not so sick as all that. Only about ten per cent. each voyage are what you might call invalids, and of them not more than half are bad cases. This is a very gay ship, I can tell you. Nathan will have said as much?"

"Yes, he seemed to set as much store on social qualities in his skipper as in seamanship," I replied.

"Well, hardly that; it is a combination of the two that is indispensable in our line of business," said Zavertal. "Old Nathan is a sharp man. If you'll allow me to say so, Captain Forrester, I think he's got the article he wants. At any rate, you look the part."

It crossed my mind that to "look the part" was about all that would be required of me in the character of a Master of the Ceremonies, if what the little Jew had told me was correct—that Zavertal himself bore the brunt of the entertaining. That would suit me very well, for I was never a lady's man, and should much social philandering be expected of me my appointment would not be likely to be a durable one.

"Well, Doctor," I said, "after all I'm here to sail the ship, and that must be my first care. I have no doubt that with you to *do* the social part I shall be able to *look* it all right."

He waved his hand deprecatingly, as though pleased that I had no intention of usurping functions which he had been in the habit of performing, and then for the fraction of a second his eyes hardened, and there came into them that peculiar glint which had startled me as he stood on the kerb in the city street. It was as if he shot one keen glance to probe my honesty of purpose and was satisfied, for the look passed and the eyes smiled again. Let me say here that though I was this man's nominal chief, and he treated me with proper deference, yet I felt from the first that his was the influence which with the owners and passengers, if we ever came to a conflict, would prevail.

We smoked and chatted for half-an-hour, and then I asked him to show me over the ship and introduce me to the other officers. To the first proposition he agreed with alacrity, the second was out of his power, as the three mates were living on shore during the steamer's stay in port. The chief officer was expected next day, but at present the ship was in charge of the bo'sun. I made the acquaintance of this honest sailor-man, and was conducted by him from stem to stern, the result of the inspection being that never had I seen a better found and equipped vessel, with more generous owners, honestly desirous of promoting the comfort of the passengers and crew. Doctor Zavertal accompanied me through the after part of the ship, but after a while he left me with the bo'sun, who took advantage of his absence to fire off a volley of eloquence on the benefit of serving such a firm as Nathan and Co. in such a craft as the *Queen of Night*.

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"Jest a sea-goin' hotel, she is," was the bo'sun's verdict. "Plenty of vittles, lib'ral grog, and every one to enjoy theirselves—'fore the mast and in the cabin. It may be kindness of 'art, or it may be the way the owners takes to make 'em forget the funerals. I don't say but what it ain't a bit of both, but it makes a live ship, anyway."

"To forget the funerals! What on earth do you mean, my man?" I exclaimed.

"Well, you see, sir," said the bo'sun, hitching up his trousers, "there be some as come aboard the *Queen* in search of 'elth as finds the other thing. Bound to be above the average of sea burials on a craft as is in a manner of speaking a 'elth resort as well as a big yacht. You may have observed, sir, that 'elth resorts is mostly the parrydise of the on'elthy."

My bo'sun was evidently a philosopher, and, gruesome as was the idea, I could well understand that it might not be altogether groundless. There is nothing more depressing than a funeral at sea, and the owners would be quite likely to do their best to counteract this influence by infusing as much gaiety as possible into the life of the ship. "But surely," I asked, "the passengers were not in the habit of dying wholesale? You cannot mean to suggest that that happens."

A tall, finely-built fellow.

"Lor' bless you, no, Captain," was the reassuring reply. "Sometimes one, sometimes two, but never more than three or four a voyage. That's not bad out of three or four hundred, and it ain't always the sickest as snuffs it the quickest, neither."

We made our way aft again along the main deck, taking the engine-room, with its slumbering "triple-expansion," "twin-screw" giants, *en route*. In passing along I could not fail to be struck with the beautiful fittings of the state-rooms, with the electric light and electric bells everywhere; while the cooks' quarters, with their shining copper utensils and cool marble slabs, the great ice-chambers, and the band-room, now empty save for rows of uniform coats and the bright brass instruments, claimed my admiration in turn. As for the grand saloon, music-room, and smoking-room, though I had sailed in many crack liners, I had never seen anything to equal the lavish splendour of the decorations in white and gold, the costly pictures, and tasteful harmony of colouring that prevailed.

Mounting to the upper deck, Simmons, the bo'sun, showed me my own cabin, which was situated under the main bridge, next the chart-room. It was a large, comfortably-furnished apartment, having a bedstead instead of a bunk in a curtained alcove, and good enough for a lady's boudoir. I had never been berthed like that before, and as I looked at the cushioned couches and easy chairs, I remember feeling positively afraid lest I should grow "soft" amid so much luxury.

Outside my cabin I dismissed Simmons from further attendance, and went towards the surgery to take leave of Doctor Zavertal before quitting the ship. Approaching his cabin from forward I had to step on several new coils of rope that had not yet been stowed, and these so deadened my footfall that I reached the door without giving any warning sound. Owing to this cause I overheard a few words of conversation which I now know were not intended for my ears.

"If this cursed American really means to go the trip, I should indeed be glad to have you with me," Doctor Zavertal was saying. "But how about your schemes for the subsequent voyage?"

"They would have to go by the board for this once," came the reply in a well-modulated gentlemanly voice. "We have done so well that we can afford to lose our special profits on one trip—what we can't afford to do is to take risks."

At this point I stepped into the cabin, and found the Doctor with a tall, finely-built fellow who had apparently not long arrived, for he stood just inside the cabin, and was in the act of removing his gloves. Neither he nor the Doctor showed any apprehension of having been overheard, but the latter said quickly:

"Ah, so you have completed your round of the ship, Captain? This gentleman, Mr.—thank you, I did not quite catch the name—Mr. Vizard, is a possible passenger, and has come to have a look at our accommodation."

"I hope he will be as pleased with it as I have been," I replied, bowing to the stranger.

"This is Captain Forrester, who has just been appointed to the command," explained Zavertal.

Mr. Vizard had been regarding me with a rather critical stare, but on the introduction being made mutual he smiled politely and remarked that he hoped to have a pleasant voyage in the *Queen of Night* under my auspices. I made the proper sort of reply, and, having arranged to take up my abode on the steamer on the following day, I bade them both good-day and went ashore.

"But why," I asked myself, as I passed through the dock gates, "did Zavertal hesitate in giving Vizard's name as though to convey the impression that it was unknown to him?"

The answer was beyond me, for I was ready to swear that they were not strangers to each other. *Vizard was the man who had been with Zavertal in Leadenhall Street on the previous day.* And who was "the cursed American," and what did "risks" and "special profits" mean?

CHAPTER V.

The Missing Passengers.

The day appointed for the departure of the *Queen of Night* broke fair and sunny, and the hour of noon found us all in trim to receive the passengers. A crew fit for a man-of-war had been shipped. The stewards' department was in full working order under its permanent chief, and the store rooms were crammed with all the delicacies in and out of season. There was little of the bustle customary on the sailing of a big steamer—first, because we carried no cargo, and, secondly, because there was no heavy baggage to be shipped. A cabin trunk or two generally sufficed each passenger for the six weeks' cruise, and these they brought with them.

We were not due to warp out of dock till three, but the first comers began to arrive in time for the luncheon that had been announced as ready for passengers and their friends at one o'clock in the grand saloon. As captain of the ship it was beneath my dignity to receive our guests in person as they came on board, but Dr. Zavertal was literally a "host in himself," welcoming, assisting, and directing everyone—a duty in which he was ably assisted by the purser and stewards. This arrangement suited me admirably. I had ascertained from the passenger-list that

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Sir Simon Crawshay had not booked a passage for himself, Aline having for a travelling companion a certain Mrs. Brinkworth, of whom I had never heard. But there was the chance that the baronet would accompany his ward to the steamer for the purpose of seeing her off, and my great fear was lest he should take her ashore again and forfeit her passage on finding that I was in command of the ship.

To obviate any such discovery, I kept my own room while the passengers were arriving, and it was fortunate that circumstances favoured my doing so without attracting attention. Apart from the fact that the Doctor was making himself so useful, I had a reasonable excuse for remaining out of sight in the necessity of sticking to my desk for the signing of reports and orders, as well as of holding an interview with Nathan to receive final instructions. There would be nothing to call me to the bridge till the bell rang "all clear."

The windows of the captain's room gave a clear view of the quay-side and of the gangway, and you may be sure that never on dark and dirty nights did I keep a sharper look out than I did for my girl's sweet face that day. Like most good things she was "lang o' comin'." Troops of smart people thronged gaily over the plank to the gangway where our courteous purser stood to check the passenger-list, the popping of champagne corks from the saloon told us that the farewell lunch had begun, but as yet there were no signs of Aline. Presently Nathan's shambling footsteps were heard outside, and he entered my cabin to furnish me with a list of places where I was to coal, and of the firms I was to deal with; and I had hard work to give him my attention and to watch the gangway at the same time.

He was sitting by my side at the cabin table with his papers before him, emphasising his instructions with the tip of a strong cigar which served the double purpose of a pointer. His ferrety eyes shifted from the paper to my face and back again perpetually, noting whether or no I understood his points. It was while he was searching for some particulars relating to his agent at Malta that my heart bounded at the sight of Aline coming across the gangplank followed by a good-looking, ladylike woman of about thirty. I had barely time to notice that my girl looked pale and sad, and to indulge the glad hope that, rather than to illness, it was due to a cause which would soon be dissipated, when a wheezing chuckle at my elbow recalled me to the desirability of concealing my emotions. I was half afraid that I had not done so, for Nathan was regarding me with a sardonic leer.

The sight of Aline coming across the gang-plank.

"I see that you are an admirer of female beauty, my gay Captain," he said, glancing significantly towards the gangway, "or perhaps you have met that charming young creature before? Which is it, may I ask?"

"A little of each, sir," I replied, with assumed indifference. "I know a pretty face when I see one, and I think I have some slight acquaintance with the young lady who has just come aboard. That is," I added, "if I am right in recognising her as a Miss Challenor, the ward of Sir Simon Crawshay."

Nathan shrugged his shoulders with an air of unconcern, but he still kept his eyes on mine as he answered: "Mosh likely that is her. A shentleman named Sir Simon Crawshay has booked passages for two ladies, I know. Ah, well, Captain," he continued, relaxing his gaze at last, "you had better make hay while the sun shines. Sir Simon will not be on board to shpoil shport."

She was standing with her back to the railing.

He evinced no curiosity as to where and when I had met Miss Challenor, and we resumed our business. Now that I was assured of Sir Simon's absence, I was able to give my owner an undivided attention, with the result that the remaining matters were quickly disposed of, and Nathan left the cabin. He had scarcely gone when the chief officer, Mr. McIntyre, came to tell me that the pilot was aboard. I gave orders for the first bell to be rung to begin to clear the ship of passengers' friends, and then went up on to the bridge to direct the preparations for warping out. After a few words with the pilot and the mates I turned to scan the deck below for Aline. I was rewarded at once. She was standing with her back to the railing on the side farthest from the quay, quite alone, and watching, with what I thought was a wistful interest, the first departures for the shore.

Telling the chief officer that I had caught sight of some friends, and that I would be back directly, I hurried from the bridge and went aft to where Aline stood. Never shall I forget the look of glad wonder with which she started to me as I softly spoke her name, and she realised by the smart uniform I was wearing that I was probably, as she *naïvely* put it, "going too." Let me be excused from recording the few words in which I confirmed that happy surmise, and those with which she received the news. Most of the people were still down in the saloon, doing justice to the farewell luncheon, and those on deck were busy with their own affairs, so that our meeting was more private than might have been expected in such a place.

"And now, dearest, what is this that Sir Simon tells me of your illness?" I asked, when I had briefly explained my position on the *Queen of Night*. "I thought you were looking a little sad just now, but you do not by any means justify the poor account he gave of you."

"There is absolutely nothing the matter with me, Cyril," she replied. "If I looked sad the cause of it is all gone *now*. I was regretting having to leave England without seeing you, but the last few minutes have changed the prospect of the voyage into a dream of delight."

"But your guardian must have had some grounds for making such a statement, surely?" I persisted, though my anxiety was nearly quelled by the obvious truth of her own account of herself. Now that the sadness had left her face, she was again the picture of radiant health.

"Oh, I expect the wish was father to the thought," she said lightly. "Sir Simon kept harping on my pallor and want of appetite—two utter fictions—so long that I almost began to believe in them myself. Do you know what I think his real motive was in sending me on this trip?"

"No; tell me," I said.

"I believe he suspected that there was something between us, and that he wanted to get me out of the way before your return," Aline said. "The steamer would have sailed a week ago, I am told, if they had found a new captain sooner. To think that it should be you."

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"Well, if that was his game, Sir Simon has been fairly sold," I laughed. "And now dearest I must run away. The skipper of a boat of this size has plenty to do on leaving port, and I may not see much of you for the next twenty-four hours. One question, though. Who is your companion?"

"She is a Mrs. Brinkworth—Ella her Christian name is, and I call her by it already," was the reply. "My guardian engaged her specially to chaperon me on this trip—through an advertisement, I believe. I have only known her three days, but I like her much. She has been unhappy in her married life—poor thing."

"Do you trust her well enough to tell her of our engagement?" I asked, with a keen appreciation of the value of a friendly chaperon during the voyage.

"I have not told her yet, but I shall soon see," Aline said, as nodding gaily she dismissed me to my duties.

It was time to finally clear the ship of strangers, and as soon as I reached the bridge I gave orders for the last warning bell to be rung. The lingerers at the saloon table came streaming up on deck, and the crowd quickly thinned as the friends and relatives of our passengers went streaming on to the quay. It was a festive scene, resembling more the close of some social function than the departure of a great steamer. The sadness of farewell, so noticeable when a regular liner starts for a distant port, was entirely absent in the case of a six weeks' pleasure cruise.

At last the chief officer reported "All clear," and I was about to order "In gang-plank," when the purser came running up the bridge ladder and announced that two passengers who had booked had not arrived. One was a Mr. Franklin Kennard, of the United States, and the other Mr. Gaston Vizard, of Park Lane. Would I wait for them?

Engaged in unpacking a parcel of drugs.

In the rush and bustle of the past week I had almost forgotten the American who had appeared while I was waiting in Nathan's office, and who had had the curious *rencontre* on the stairs with some unknown individual as he left. Vizard, of course, I remembered as the man whom I had seen on two occasions—once in Leadenhall Street, and again when I first came to see the ship. I was too busy to be struck with the coincidence that the only two intending passengers, besides Aline, of whom I had any previous knowledge, and both, so far as I knew, entirely unconnected with each other, should have failed to embark. All my mind was concentrated on getting the ship away as quickly as possible, and knowing that Zavertal was practically in charge of the passengers, and would be aware whether any special circumstances called on me to wait for the two truants, I ran down to consult him.

In the last few days, while living on board, I had got very chummy with the Doctor, and deciding to draw the "home cover" first, though hardly expecting to find him there, I did not hesitate in my haste to open the door of his cabin without knocking. Judge, then, of my surprise when crossing the threshold I not only heard Zavertal's voice, but, as I thought, that of the Mr. Vizard who I had just been informed was not on the ship. Opening the door smartly, I was still more astonished to see the Doctor, quite alone, engaged in unpacking a parcel of drugs.

"I thought I heard Mr. Vizard's voice," I said, looking round blankly.

"Did you, Captain?" said Zavertal, looking up with his usual friendly smile. "I expect he is somewhere around on deck, then."

"No," I answered; "I didn't see any one outside. I came to say that the purser reports him as not on board. Also another passenger who booked—a Mr. Kennard—has not turned up. What is the custom in such cases? Shall we give them a little law?"

"Well," said the Doctor in the confidentially respectful tone of a subordinate who desires to be really helpful, "that is for you to decide, sir; but if I may advise you in my private capacity I should say *not*. The owners won't be inclined to blame you for a couple of forfeited passages, seeing that there will be two mouths less to fill. It has happened before, and the last captain never waited?"

"That settles it, then," I exclaimed, and returning to the bridge I gave the word to close the gangway and warp out of dock. So sure was I of having heard Vizard's voice that I suspected the Doctor of a practical joke, and I was strengthened in the idea by having noticed a tremulous motion in the curtain that screened the bedplace from the surgery. I fully expected that Vizard, if not Kennard as well, would put in an appearance the first time the gong sounded for a meal.

But it was not so. Owing to the difficult navigation at the mouth of the river I had to stick to the bridge that night, and was unable to join the company at dinner in the saloon. After the meal was over, however, I sent for the purser and inquired if anything had been seen of either Mr. Kennard or Mr. Vizard.

"No, sir," was the reply; "they are certainly not on the ship. Their cabins are unoccupied, and they were not at dinner. I have ticked them off as 'forfeits.'"

(To be continued.)

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A

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